

The Doldenhorn and Weisse Frau

Abraham Roth, Edmond
de Fellenberg, Edmund von Fellenberg

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THE DOLDENHORN AND WEISSE FRAU.



DOLDENHORN and WEISSE FRAU

by

A. Roth & E. v. Fellenberg.

Cöln
H. Bodecker
1863

Burn & Jeffer ss

THE
DOLDENHORN
AND
WEISSE FRAU.

ASCENDED FOR THE FIRST TIME

BY

ABRAHAM ROTH

AND

EDMUND VON FELLEBERG.

BY

ABRAHAM ROTH. PH. D.

Editor of the Swiss "Bund" etc. etc.

With 11 coloured engravings from sketches by PH. GOSSET and
E. V. FELLEBERG, 4 woodcuts and a coloured map in the
scale of : 50,000 by J. R. STENGEL.

COBLENZ.

KARL BÄDEKER.

LONDON.

1863.

EDINBURGH.

WILLIAMS AND NORGATE.

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## INTRODUCTION.

Among the many thousands who annually visit the Bernese Oberland, by far the greater portion ascend the lakes from Thun, and traverse the district lying between Interlaken and the Grimsel, which undoubtedly comprises some of the grandest Alpine features. A comparatively small number wend their way to the western portion of the mountains and valleys of the Oberland, although these are little inferior in beauty and interest; and strangely enough, even those who select Interlaken as head-quarters for excursions do not explore the valleys of the Kander and the Simmen so often as their attractions merit. Yet these, and more especially the district intersected by the Kander, possess some of the most magnificent features of which the Swiss Alpine regions can boast. The mountains of this tract cannot indeed vie in grandeur with the central chain of the Finsteraarhorn and Jungfrau, yet a singularly happy combination of the lovely with the imposing invests the scenery with a rare charm.

In the river district of the Kander the palm is due to the main valley itself, the Gemmi route, which ascends the stream from its junction with the Lake of Thun, and at Kandersteg diverges eastwards through the Gasterthal to

the Tschingel Glacier, and southwards to the Gemmi Pass. Nothing can be lovelier than the ascent of the verdant and wooded slopes on which the village of Aeschi is situated, commanding an delightful prospect of the Lake of Thun; nothing more attractive than the drive through the luxuriant valley from Mühlenen to Frutigen, whilst a succession of snow-clad mountains display their glaciers towering above the rocks in the background; nothing, in fine, more picturesque than the walk through the pine and maple-clad dale, as far as the elevated pasture valley of Kandersteg, the vestibule of some of the grandest Alpine scenery.

If a characteristic feature of the Bernese Alps, consisting in the distinctness and variety of form with which their summits rise from their glacier pedestals, has been justly extolled, the same commendation may fairly be claimed by the snow-clad peaks which command the Kanderthal. Here the Wildstrubel, like a huge colossus, towers over the Engstligenthal. The Rinderhorn arches upwards its spotless mantle to the azure sky. Above it rises the graceful glacier-pyramid of the Altels, the admiration of all Gemmi travellers, on their way to the warm springs of Leuk. But even this dazzling peak is surpassed by the more imposing proportions of the adjacent Balmhorn. Finally, from the main chain to which these mountains belong, rise the majestic Doldenhorn and Frau or Blümlisalp, more elevated than the three first-mentioned, and inferior to the Balmhorn alone: the Doldenhorn as a graceful double pyramid on a massive basis of rock and glacier, the Blümlisalp constituting, as it were, a mountainous region of its own, over whose innumerable ridges the glaciers throw their huge folds, and in whose splendour the Frau vies with the renowned Jungfrau herself.

The Doldenhorn and Blümlisalp are those with which we propose to make the reader acquainted. Let us then first determine the topographical position and importance of these mountains with respect to the entire Bernese chain. A glance at the map shows us that the long chain, which extends from the Grimsel to the Diablerets, is guarded, as it were, by outposts towards the north and south. The southern outpost, separated from the principal chain by the Aletsch and Löt-schen Glaciers, is the Nesthorn chain, which commences with the huge Aletschhorn, and in the Nesthorn and Bietschhorn attains an altitude entitling it to rank among the giants of the Alps. Towards the north the main group is guarded by two outposts. The first is the Schreckhorn chain, separated from the Finsteraarhorn mass by the Finsteraar and Lower Grindelwald Glaciers, and itself possessing another outpost in the Wetterhörner, between which and the Schreckhorn chain the Lauteraar and the Upper Grindelwald Glaciers are imbedded. The second northern outpost is the chain which attains its greatest elevation in the Gspaltenhorn, the Blümlisalp and the Doldenhorn, all of them separated from the principal chain by the magnificent Tschingel Glacier.

These three mountains vie with those of the main group, both in altitude and the picturesque configuration peculiar to the Bernese Alps. On the south side their precipitous and abrupt walls of rock, rising from the Tschingel Glacier, display no great variety, but on the north side each of them is distinguished by a characteristic beauty of form. On the eastern wing of this advanced line rises the Gspaltenhorn, a jagged ridge, as its name indicates, in which the file of time has produced sharp indentations (*Spalten*). The highest peak of the Gspaltenhorn measures 11,268 Eng. ft. The

central mountain of the three is the Blümlisalp, distinguished by the rare beauty of its form, unfolding from a group of peaks, her rich glacier-robe; in the Blümlisalphorn, the highest of these, this advanced chain attains its greatest altitude (12,051 ft.). On the western wing rises the Doldenhorn (11,975 ft.), connected with the Blümlisalp by means of the less important Freundhorn (11,114 ft.).

At the present day when an acquaintance with the nature of glaciers, and with it a zest for surmounting heights hitherto considered inaccessible, have advanced with such rapid strides, it is difficult to comprehend why these beautiful summits, situated in such proximity to the inhabited world, have, until very recently, been trodden by no human foot. The Gspaltenhorn may indeed still boast of its virginity. The Blümlisalphorn was surmounted for the first time in the summer of 1860 by one the most expert and aspiring members of the Alpine club, Mr. LESLIE STEPHEN, attended by MELCHIOR ANDEREGG of Meiringen and FRITZ OGI of Kandersteg. The central peak of the Blümlisalp, the Weisse Frau (12,021 ft.), and the Doldenhorn were first vanquished by the actors in the scenes attempted to be described in the following pages.

# **DOLDENHORN.**

Great Doldenhorn  
Organendoldenhorn  
Spitzhorn

Little Doldenhorn  
Alt Doldenhorn Doldenstock

Flaurocker



Doldenhorn - Group from Hintersteg.

Doldenhorn-Gruppe von Hintersteg aus.

## Ascent of the Little Horn.

The most interesting aspects of the Doldenhorn are towards the north and north-west. From the principal points of view in Bern its north side is seen immediately to the west of the Niesen, rising in a slender white peak from its broad snowy shoulders. From Kandersteg at its base it is observed in two different, but equally striking aspects: at the entrance to the valley it appears with much greater distinctness than from Bern, divided\* into the Great and Little Horn, and from the balcony at the back of the "Hôtel Victoria" as the Great Horn alone, sharply defined as a snowy needle against the blue sky. As the latter measures 11,975 ft., as already observed, and the valley of Kandersteg not more than 3840 ft., the mountain displays from its base to its summit the imposing elevation of upwards of 8000 ft. To the north, snow and glacier slope with almost fearful rapidity and savage abruptness upwards of 6400 ft. down to the Oeschinensee. The snow pyramid inclining to the north-west, i. e. towards Kandersteg, rests on a broad and lofty pedestal of rock; its slope

\* See Placé No. 1, The Doldenhorn Group, as seen from Kandersteg.



is somewhat more gradual than that towards the north, but still sufficiently precipitous, and rendered extremely difficult of access by a succession of parallel chasms and glacier-crevasses which horizontally intersect the snowy incline. This circumstance frequently renders the north-western slope of the mountain a very hazardous locality, which until very recently was entirely shunned, and deemed quite as impracticable as the altogether inaccessible northern side. When, therefore, MESSRS. EDMUND V. FELLEBERG of Bern, PHILIP GOSSET of Bern, and JOHN ST. BOALT of Ohio commenced preparations for the subjugation of the mountain, they shrunk before its formidable aspect quite as much as others had before them, who viewed the Doldenhorn with similar intentions. These young men, however, were not so easily daunted, but hoped by skilful management to avoid the chasms, and to attain the Great Horn from the vicinity of the Little Horn; but the latter must first be reached by traversing the Fisistock.

We must, however, not anticipate, but give an account of the expedition with due chronological exactitude.

In the beautiful month of May, in 1862, the Alps glistened most attractively down to their very bases. Where dense masses of snow usually lie at this season, now sprang fragrant herbs, and the familiar tinkling of the cattle bells was re-echoed by rocks, which generally during two months longer resound with the croaking of the mountain birds. On one of these beautiful spring days the three above-named friends sat in a shady arbour at Bern; a bottle of generous old wine awakened pleasant recollections of former exploits, and created a burning thirst for action. FELLEBERG and GOSSET, though still young in years, were already tried glacier pioneers; the former had,

in the early part of the same month, accomplished the ascent of the Altels. The American, being on a visit to Switzerland, longed with a spirit of enterprise characteristic of his nation forthwith to attack one of these majestic eminences. Which to attempt was now the eagerly discussed question, and as the two Swiss were ambitious of the honour of achieving the conquest of a virgin peak, the deliberation terminated in the selection of the Doldenhorn.

The morning of the 27th of May found the three friends en route for the Frutigen Valley, duly equipped for a mountain expedition. When, however, the eye glanced from the animated group of travellers to the mists which hovered over the heights, and were finally converted into a pouring rain, it might well be doubted whether their ardour were not in some degree damped. But the spirits of youth are not so easily quenched; our wayfarers laughed at the rain which came down in torrents till Frutigen was reached, and thence penetrated the dense wintry fog to Kandersteg, where they sought to drown their misgivings in stiff grog by the fire-side. The following day proved unfavourable for the contemplated ascent, but the night cleared up so promisingly that half an hour after midnight, on the morning of the 29th, the party set out.

Their path lay at first along the Gemmi route; at the saw-mill the Kander was crossed, and the dense wood, which clothes the lower slopes of the Fisistock, entered. In this pitchy darkness a lantern proved of the greatest service. A good hour's walk from the bottom of the valley brought them to a bifurcation of the path; that to the left leading to the Alp Byberg, that to the right to the still more elevated Fisi-alp. Of the guides CHRISTEN LAUENER and JOHANN BISCHOF of Lauterbrunnen and CHRISTEN OGI of Kandersteg, none

were acquainted with the projected route, and the decision with regard to the path to be selected was left to the Kandersteg guide, as being most likely to form a correct judgment of the locality. He accordingly decided in favour of the path to the right, by following which advice the party, as it afterwards appeared, got on an entirely wrong track.

At daybreak the green terrace of the Fisialp, situated above the tree-zone, was attained, and immediately in front of the wanderers rose the partially snow-clad precipices of the Fisistock. The Alp was traversed diagonally, and the mountain ascended some 200 ft., when the path, suddenly turning a corner, disclosed a narrow, snowy gorge, dividing the mountain into two equal portions. At a considerable elevation, the bottom of this valley was attained, and after an ascent in it of one hour and a half, the first golden rays of the sun illumined the surrounding rocks. At 6 o'clock the ridge at the upper extremity of the ravine, connecting the two portions of the Fisistock, was attained, and here the travellers were greeted by the summit of the Little Doldenhorn. Far below to the right lay the Gasterthal, from which rose the huge Balmhorn, extending its crest far above the spectators.

From this ridge the party again ascended the Fisistock for half an hour, and traversing a shelving snow-field reached a snow-clad basin, which extends between the Fisistock and the Little Doldenhorn in so level a surface that they gave it the name of the "ball-room", and which lower down sends a flat glacier into the Gasterthal, whilst to the north it is bounded by a low ridge whose farther side descends in abrupt precipices. The flat glacier was crossed in the direction of this ridge, from the summit of which it was proposed that the entire locality should be reconnoitred.

The result, however, was by no means a favourable one. The survey was made, and the party at once perceived that they had been misled. Whilst they had hoped to attain from this point the glaciers which descend towards the north-west from the summit of the Great Doldenhorn, and to traverse the already-mentioned chasms and crevasses, the absolute impossibility of the scheme became apparent; not a single practicable means of communication offered. The disappointed mountaineers were therefore compelled to retrace their steps to the flat glacier, and traversing this, to steer their course towards the little Doldenhorn. Thence possibly some means of attaining the Great Horn might be discovered.

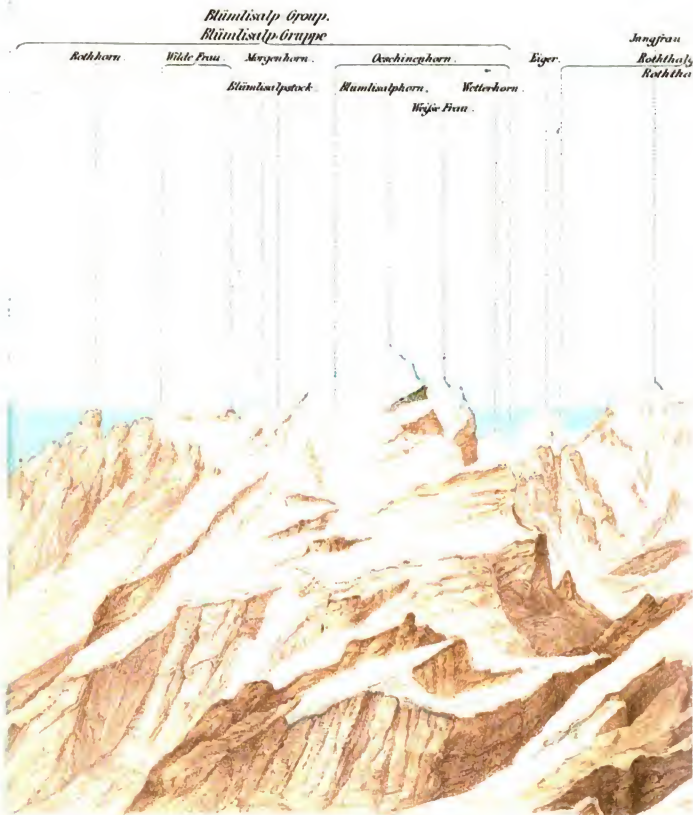
The Little Doldenhorn, whose summit lies 11,453 ft. above the level of the sea, as seen from the flat glacier, presents the appearance of a lofty wall of rock, 1600—2000 ft. in height, rising boldly from the midst of glaciers, and only here and there intersected by snow-furrows. From the dice-like shoulders of this rock rises the slender snow-pyramid of the extreme summit. Could the precipice once be surmounted, the ascent of the peak would evidently present no great difficulty.

This bare wall, however, presented a task of the most arduous nature. Proceeding from the glacier, the party traversed the chasm, abundantly vaulted over with snow, and which probably at a later period in the season is not unattended with danger. The precipice was then mounted by means of the snow-furrows, which were occasionally interrupted by scattered masses of rock. The abruptness of the acclivity generally rendered anything but a zig-zag direction impracticable. To prevent the possibility of any casualty the party took the precaution of attaching themselves together by means of the

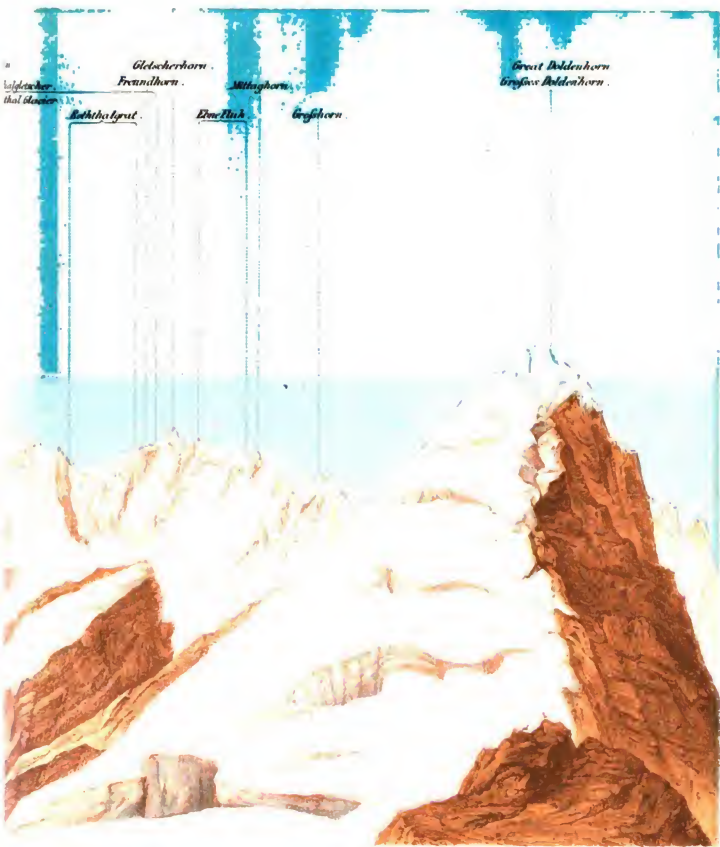
rope. Here and there the snow was quitted for the bare rock, whenever this seemed more accessible, and after scrambling upwards on all fours for a time, the furrows would again prove serviceable. When these at last became unavailable, it was found necessary to have recourse to steps hewn by the hatchet, and after a final clambering over the rock, the verge of the precipice was attained. This extremely arduous undertaking was accomplished in a comparatively short space of time, as the party had steadily and unremittingly kept their object in view.

About 10 o'clock the last angle of this refractory rock was surmounted, and the glistening snow-crest rose immediately before the astonished and delighted gaze of the party. Towards the north lay the Oeschinensee, encircled with its mountains, and far beyond stretched the luxuriant and genial plains. Here the baggage was deposited, a hard-earned siesta indulged in, and the guide LAUENER meanwhile despatched to reconnoitre the snowy ridge which extended upwards from the verge of the surmounted precipice towards the crest of the Horn.

Eager to attain the summit, which now lay so near, the remainder of the party soon followed, selecting the side of the ridge which presented the least precipitous slope. Even this proved sufficiently arduous, and the difficulty of the ascent was greatly increased by the hard coating of slippery ice by which the granulated snow was covered. During three quarters of an hour recourse was had to steps hewn by the hatchet. Gradually the pyramid decreased, the prospect unfolded itself on all sides, and a stupendous expanse lay at the feet of the spectators. Exultingly beat the hearts of the adventurers, when at a quarter past 11 o'clock they gained the extreme summit,



*Panorama des kleinen Doldenhorns gegen Osten.*



*Panorama from the Little Boldenhorn towards the East.*

a snowy ridge, 20 ft. in length and 2—5 ft. in breadth, extending from east to west, and commanding a magnificent and boundless prospect.

But alas! what was this equally magnificent and still more lofty snowy pyramid, glistening in the sun towards the south east, in their immediate vicinity? It is the Great Doldenhorn, separated from the Little Horn by a yawning abyss which no human foot can traverse. "Mein Gott!" exclaims old LAUENER, "no chamois could get across!"

The object of the party was thus defeated, inasmuch as the Great Doldenhorn was their intended goal, which in this direction was manifestly inaccessible. Had our lusty adventurers merely desired to vanquish a virgin peak, and a remarkably beautiful one too, their object was attained; for this mountain had hitherto been untrodden by human foot. Its 11,453 ft. place it on a par with the Sustenhorn, the Silberhorn, and other mountains of very respectable altitude. Rejoice then, ye pioneers, for you may reasonably be proud of your feat! Bischof, out with one of your genuine Swiss songs! And thou, red and white flag, flutter to proclaim the triumph to the four winds of heaven! This was Ascension-day; a fitting spot for the celebration of that holy event!

But the accomplishment of a daring feat was not the sole ground for exultation; the party were richly rewarded by the noble prospect before them. Particularly imposing was the proud pyramid of the Great Doldenhorn, rising in the immediate vicinity; then the Blümlisalp, and between these the grand chain which proceeds from the Tschingel to find its culminating points in the Jungfrau and Eiger.\*

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\* See Plate No. 3, Panorama of the Little Doldenhorn.



After the flag had been unfurled, and the usual libation of several bottles solemnly performed, the party began to think of the descent. The feet were becoming benumbed in the snow, and the son of Ohio, unaccustomed to such lofty regions, began to feel somewhat dizzy and nervous. At 12 o'clock, therefore, the retreat was sounded.

The descent of the snowy cone was accomplished rapidly and merrily, as the surface had become so soft as to render the hewn steps unnecessary. At the verge of the rocky wall a frugal dinner was partaken of, the baggage strapped on, and the descent of the precipice, which had been surmounted with so much difficulty, commenced. This turned out to be a more arduous undertaking than the first. The limestone rocks had become wet and slippery from the melting of the snow, so that the utmost caution was necessary to avoid accidents. Let the reader bear in mind that a single false step might have occasioned a somersets of some 1500—2000 ft.! If the party sought to escape this danger by following the snow furrows, they frequently found that it was "out of the frying-pan into the fire"; for the softening snow would occasionally threaten to engulf them in a most uncomfortable manner. Moreover the extreme declivity of these furrows sometimes set large masses of snow in motion under the feet of the travellers, causing the whole party to glide downwards in avalanche fashion. Nor were real avalanches wanting; they would slowly and in solid masses begin by gliding down the furrows, and finally precipitate themselves on the glacier in the form of clouds of dust. More than once, too, stones deprived of their support were hurled past the heads of the clamberers. In this far from enjoyable predicament, every precaution was most sedulously adopted, and to a rigid observance of this line of

conduct alone was the party indebted for their safe arrival at the foot of the treacherous precipice.

At the base of the rock, the softened state of the snow on the glacier again presented considerable difficulties, which however were overcome without mishap. The party had by this time become heartily tired of wading through the snow, and gladly adopted Ogi's suggestion to abandon the former route which continued to traverse fields of snow, and to diverge to the left towards the Gasternthal, where they hoped more speedily to gain a firm footing on rock and pasture. After crossing the precipitous lateral moraine of the flat glacier, which declines towards the south, and sliding down the last snow-fields, the party descended slopes covered with fragments of rock and rubbish for hours, from terrace to terrace, skirting the southern side of the Fisistock.

When they had attained the region where vegetation begins to unfold its green mantle, one of the travellers, in passing, cautiously peeped over the brink of a perpendicular wall of rock —

"Hush!"

"What is it?"

"Hush! Hush!"

This admonition, coupled with an air of astonishment and delight, attracted the remainder of the party on tiptoe to the spot, where each prostrated himself and eagerly protruded his head over the verge of the precipice. There, at the very feet of the spectators, scarce 150 ft. below them, lay a troop of four chamois, on the grass, calmly reposing in the shade. The graceful animals seemed to have no presentiment that treacherous man was so near. Gradually, however, they must have scented the danger; one by one they rose, stretched their

necks, sniffed the air in all directions and wagged their short tails; then, still sniffing, they described short circuits in a canter — — "Juaho!" suddenly burst from the guide Bischof in a shrill and piercing tone, and like lightning the four-footed company disappeared over the rocks.

At 4 o'clock the party gained a rugged Alp, where amidst rocks and rotting stumps a small number of cows and goats were grazing. Precipitous rocks and rubbish-covered slopes were again traversed, and at 5 o'clock the flowery carpet of the Gasterthal attained. As the evening began to close in, our travellers arrived at the "Bear Hotel" at Eggenschwand, and, after some slight refreshment, proceeded to their night-quarters, the "Hôtel Victoria", which they regained at night-fall, 19½ hrs. from the time when they had quitted it.

The people of the inn had repeatedly in the course of the day looked eagerly in the direction of the Great Doldenhorn (the Little Horn is not visible from the hotel), and failing to discover any symptom of a successful ascent, concluded that the expedition was a failure. On the following morning, however, with the aid of a telescope, the summit of the Little Horn was distinctly visible from a different point of view, and proudly fluttering on its snowy crest waved the familiar red flag with its white cross. But adjoining it rose the stupendous Great Doldenhorn, still unconquered, and virginlike repelling all approach. And yet thou too, cold beauty, must succumb!

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## Ascent of the Great Horn.

A few days after the above-described expedition the Author sat at his desk, ruminating over a leading article for his journal, when a knock was heard at the door.

"Come in!"

"Good morning, doctor!"

"Good morning! With whom have I the honour?"

"FELLENBERG."

"Ah! welcome, young comrade of the glaciers. You have soon got down from the Altels."

"From the Doldenhorn too."

At these words our editorial brow contracted gloomily; the young man with the somewhat blistered face, however, continued good-humouredly:

"To confess the truth, it is only the Little Horn I have vanquished; but I have still an eye to the Great, and should perhaps have accomplished it but for the vexatious, rainy weather. And now I wished to ask you to do me the favour not to make any mention of the attempt recently made, in case it should have come to your knowledge from some other source, until the grand undertaking has succeeded."

"I shall most willingly comply with your wish. But really, young man, I ought to be extremely angry with you."

"And why?"

"For robbing me of a most pleasant dream I have been indulging in the whole winter."

"So you fondly hoped to be the first to accomplish this ascent?"

"Precisely."

"Why, then I'll tell you what! Suppose we go together."

"Can you wait three weeks?"

"Certainly."

"Bravo! young man; that I call a true Christian deed. Done! 'And arm in arm we'll blithely go', as the poet hath it."

"Done!"

The rainy weather lasted till the fourth week in June. The party of the 29th of May was dispersed; FELLEBERG alone was prepared for another similar exploit, but was this time, according to agreement, to be joined by the Author. On the first fine day we set out, and as on the former occasion were doomed to spend a few days of unsettled weather at Kandersteg, previous to the commencement of the undertaking.

During this period of inactivity, occasional glimpses of sunshine enabled us, with the assistance of our telescopes, to reconnoitre the contemplated route, and to gain some preliminary information. The inspection of the entire region from the Little Horn on the 29th of May had rendered it obvious that the Great Horn could only be attained by traversing the wide chasms and crevasses already mentioned. The greater portion of this route may be surveyed from the point whence our sketch was taken. The pedestal is formed by the forests of the Fisistock; beyond the upper limits of these the Alp Byberg is situated in a basin; then a lofty rocky platform, declining precipitously towards the spectator, which extends from the upper base of the Fisistock to the Oeschinensee. From this platform a rock-strewn slope ascends to a second terrace, on which, to the right, reposes one base of the Dolden Glacier, to the left rises a group of rocks, resembling a basaltic formation, with the so-called "Spitzstein." From this last terrace

the route diverges to the right towards the glacier, and proceeds in a straight direction towards the great chasms. To facilitate the passage of these, FELLEBERG had caused a glacier-ladder, 22 ft. in length, to be constructed, consisting of the stem of a young pine, cut to the proper shape, and furnished with 14 steps. Between the second and third chasm commences the region of avalanches, which are precipitated from the north-eastern snowy slope of the Little Horn into this domain of crevasses, and numerous recent traces of which could be detected with the aid of the telescope. Beyond the highest chasm, the snowy slope rises precipitously, but in a compact mass, and therefore unattended with danger, as far as the snow-ridge which connects the two horns, whence with similar compactness rises the highest snow-pyramid.

The double danger of the passage of the great chasms, and the exposure to avalanches, leads us to the conviction that the Great Doldenhorn is accessible only under a peculiar combination of circumstances, which in all probability does not occur every year. For, if the winter and spring have left a scanty sprinkling of snow on the mountain, either the chasms are too wide to be crossed, even with the aid of ladders, or the snow-bridges are so frail as to preclude the possibility of a safe transit. If, on the other hand, sufficient snow has fallen to render the snow-bridges substantial, the mountaineer is exposed to considerable danger from the shelving masses of snow on the Little Horn, which become loosened by the heat of the sun. For our successful passage between this Scylla and Charybdis we were indebted to the following circumstances. A considerable quantity of spring snow lay on the ground; a slight shower of rain had fallen on the day previous to the ascent; the following night was cold, in consequence of which

the surface of the snow softened by the rain became frozen, and thus gained the firmness requisite to render the bridges trustworthy, and at the same time check the avalanches.

Those who may be disposed to undertake this expedition are cautioned to pay strict attention to the following circumstances; otherwise we cannot vouch for the success of the enterprise.

During several days, when an alternation of fog, rain, newly-fallen snow, and repeated avalanches from the Little Horn condemned us to inaction, we not only found sufficient leisure to make a careful inspection of the mountain, as far as was possible from the valley, but at the same time held a careful muster of our guides. Each traveller had brought his own. FELLEBERG had engaged the services of CHRISTEN LAUENER and JOHANN BISCHOF of Lauterbrunnen, who had accompanied him in the ascent of May 29th, and in a former attempt to ascend the Weisse Frau. LAUENER was a discreet old man, whose caution occasionally bordered on timidity; up to the last moment he evinced a most profound awe of the Great Horn, so as almost to infect the other guides with his apprehensions, and on the night before the undertaking even proposed to exchange it for the Blümlisalp. BISCHOF, on the contrary, was an audacious tailor, whose courage frequently verged on foolhardiness, and at the same time a droll fellow, with an unlimited supply of songs and grimaces at his command, with which he never failed to divert us whenever occasion demanded. The Author was attended by his experienced guide KASPAR BLATTER of Meiringen, a practised chamois-hunter, who had accompanied him in several previous exploits of a similar nature. This man might be termed a happy medium between LAUENER and BISCHOF; he possessed a most admirable combin-

ation of courage and caution, and was considered unrivalled in his acquaintance with the glaciers and the various ways in which they are affected by the weather. In addition to BLATTER, the Author had engaged the services of GILGIAN REICHEN of Kandersteg, a remarkably intelligent man, and well acquainted with his native mountains. It may not here be out of place to mention a feat performed by this guide, which we learned from a credible source. One day he had shot a chamois on the ridge of a shelving precipice, opposite to Bunderbach, and the animal had with several bounds been precipitated into a gorge, not accessible from the valley. Under these circumstances he had no choice but to scramble down the precipice at the risk of breaking his neck, or to leave his prey to the eagles. In such a dilemma a determined Alpine huntsman does not long hesitate; he will rather risk his life than relinquish his booty. REICHEN accordingly, with the utmost difficulty scrambled down the frightful abyss, several hundred feet in depth, and reached the chamois in safety. But how regain the height? For this emergency, however, he was prepared. He had furnished himself with a rope, to one end of which he secured the chamois, taking the other between his teeth. He then proceeded to clamber up the precipice to the full extent of the rope, when he would halt, select some rocky ledge to which to draw up his prey, deposit it there, and then resume his perilous ascent, adopting the same expedient. Thus, stage by stage, our huntsman regained the summit, in constant danger of being himself precipitated into the abyss and becoming a prey to the eagles.

These four attendants would have amply sufficed, and we had no intention of increasing our number. CHRISTEN OGI, however, was grievously disappointed, on learning that



his services were considered superfluous. He had accompanied the travellers of May 29<sup>th</sup>, and constructed the ladder employed on that occasion; he therefore feared that the other villagers would consider it an everlasting disgrace, if he should not be permitted to participate in the grand enterprise. The guide LAUENER, too, had brought his son PETER with him, thinking he might be of some service; and the latter hung his head sorrowfully, on hearing his discharge spoken of. In consideration, however, of the ladder, the Swiss flag, 8 ft. square, attached to a somewhat substantial staff, and the 150 ft. of rope, the weight of which would necessitate a frequent change of porters, and feeling, moreover, considerable sympathy for the feelings of the aspirants, we decided eventually in favour of permitting OGI and PETER to accompany us.

On the afternoon of Sunday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, the weather being still somewhat unpropitious, we found time hang rather heavy on our hands, and towards evening proposed a walk to the parsonage of the village. Its worthy inmate, himself not unaccustomed to such expeditions, evinced a lively interest in our scheme; and those who are acquainted with the hospitality of the Swiss clergy will not be surprised that we were here entertained with music, conversation, and sundry beverages, till a late hour in the night. During this period we made the welcome discovery that the barometer was decidedly rising, and on going into the open air we were greeted by groups of stars, glittering brilliantly from amidst the dispersing clouds.

"FELLENBERG, this is Doldenhorn weather. To-night or never!"

"To-night or never! So be it."

The guides concurred in our opinion. They had come a considerable portion of the way to meet us, and communicate the joyful tidings, and when from the highest point of the path ascending from Mittholz to Kandersteg they heard our approaching voices, they saluted us with the most boisterous shouts and the "Jodler" or cattle-call, which produces so pleasing an effect among the mountains. The expedition was determined on; the same night we must start. Although after 10 o'clock when we reached Kandersteg, we at once commenced the necessary preparations, which occupied about an hour. The hour from 11 to 12 was destined for repose, but though we retired to bed for form's sake, not one of us could close an eye from excitement. At midnight we rose, packed, breakfasted, and by 1 o'clock were ready to start, with the exception of REICHEN, who had somewhat inconsiderately gone home to busy himself with the preparation of breakfast. Thus a precious hour was lost, during which the remainder of the party fumed in a state of frantic impatience.

At length at 2 o'clock we started. The route again lay along the wooded slopes of the Fisistock, and the rugged wooden causeway was again illumined by the feeble light of a lantern. Where, however, the party of May 29 th, had diverged to the right towards the Fisialp, we selected the path to the left, and in an hour reached the Byberg, a beautiful Alpine pasture encircled with forest. In the chalet lustily snored the herdsman and his family, and around it were stretched the drowsy cattle, a few of which lazily stretched their necks at the sight of the unwonted apparition. To the right rose the rocky walls of the Fisistock in rigid and gloomy barrenness, and the cold, spectral glaciers of the Dol-

denhorn presented anything but a cheerful aspect. The stars now began to pale, and faint streaks of dawn illumined the sky.

After a few moments of repose, we proceeded to the slopes of the lofty terrace which rises from the Byberg, and our route then lay in a tolerably straight direction, over sticks and stones, tangled thickets and fern-fields, ascending rapidly at about the same angle as the terrace forms with the Fisistock. During this arduous ascent, which afforded such ample occupation for the lungs of the whole party that scarcely a single word was interchanged, it was impossible to help admiring the skill and perseverance of those who carried the ponderous ladder on their shoulders. The rustling of the bushes, the crackling of the broken ferns, and the occasional rolling of stones loosened by the feet were the sole sounds which broke the stillness of the early morning.

With great rapidity, about 4 o'clock, this stage was accomplished, and the platform reached; the march, however, suffered no interruption, and now led over a wild, shelving surface, strewn with fragments of rock and heaps of loose stones which greatly impeded our progress. Meanwhile broad daylight had diffused itself over the imposing mountain scene. After having proceeded another quarter of an hour in the direction of the "Spitzstein", a brilliant apparition suddenly arrested the steps of the caravan. Immediately above the summit of the sharply-defined ridge of the Great Doldenhorn gleamed a golden point, which most of the party at first believed to be the gloriously setting Venus. A few moments careful observation, however, convinced us that it was nothing other than the extremity of the Horn itself, bathed like a gilded pinnacle in the morning sun. This magnifi-

cent and auspicious spectacle electrified the entire column, and with redoubled buoyancy of spirits we hastened towards our goal.

At a quarter before 5 o'clock we halted at the foot of the Spitzstein to unpack our campaigner's breakfast. This mass of rock and its uncouth neighbours, which at a distance present the appearance of a basaltic group, now proved to be composed of weathered limestone, evidently doomed like their predecessors to find a watery grave in the Oeschinensee. Before us rose majestically the two peaks of the Doldenhorn, to the east appeared the imposing Blümlisalphorn, flanked by the Rothhorn and Oeschinenhorn; and the pinnacles of the Fisistock, the Grosslohner, and the entire chain as far as the Niesen glowed in the brilliant morning sun. But the terrace of the Spitzstein was not yet surmounted; here a long moraine occasioned us considerable fatigue, the chaos of stones became wilder at every step. During the ascent we approached the brink of the slope which supports the moraine, and here shelves precipitously towards the Oeschinensee. The greenish blue waters of this little lake already lay several thousand feet below us; its situation in a profound basin, enclosed on the north side by the huge and rugged glacier-slope which abruptly descends from the Great Doldenhorn to the depth of 6000 ft., bordered on the awful. Not less imposing, rose from the lake the nearly perpendicular Blümlisalphorn, with its equally rich coating of snow, and raising its crest a few feet higher than our present goal. Adjacent to it, the Oeschinen Alps, from the lake as far as the Oeschinengrat, lay extended before us. This magnificent and extensive prospect, the gradual transition of the moraine to hard snow, the glacier air which descended from the heights — all pro-

claimed that we were approaching the sanctuary, as yet profaned by no human foot.

At ten minutes before 7 o'clock we had gained the second terrace, opposite to the beautiful white cones of the Great as well as the Little Doldenhorn. The sun was now reflected so glaringly from these glistening walls, that the eyes were fain to seek refuge behind the veils. Twenty minutes more, and we stood on the verge of the glacier.

Now began the serious portion of the enterprise. For several hours the utmost caution combined with courage became absolutely necessary. Fully aware of the grim character of the enemy we were about to attack, we instituted our defensive operations in a manner worthy of experienced generals. As skirmishers, Bischof and Reichen, each in a certain direction, preceded us. At a suitable distance, the main body of the army, consisting of ourselves and the two guides BLATTER and LAUENER bound together by the rope, followed. OGI and PETER LAUENER with the ladder and flag, constituted the rear-guard. Allowing our fancies to roam, we thought we could detect the Wildstrubel, which with its cumbrous glacier crown peered over the Fisistock at us, deriding our prudential measures; but they were by no means out of place. For, a few minutes later, the glacier assumed such an aspect that the main body was compelled to halt, and despatch the skirmishers to a still greater distance to reconnoitre the ground. To the right, where the slope of the glacier was more gradual, yawned a vast chasm, which, though thickly vaulted over with snow, exhibited sundry frightful fissures, proclaiming the unwelcome fact that the snow-bridges were by no means very substantial. The entire party testified a most profound respect for these crevasses,



*Das Leiterflühdli.      The "Leiterflühdli."*

and would have preferred to ascend in a straight direction, in spite of the greater precipitousness. Before us rose from the abrupt glacier-shelf a small ridge of rock, which, though presenting some difficulty, seemed surmountable; what lay above and behind this, it was the object of the advanced guard to discover.

The reposing main column anxiously observed their proceedings, and the labour evidently requisite for the ascent, gave a foretaste of what we had to expect. The result of the reconnoitre was that both routes, that over the rock and the other over the chasm, converged farther on. Our awe of the latter induced us at once to direct our course towards the ridge. In ascending, the explorers had disturbed the snow in many places, so that the remainder of the party found the difficulty of the task considerably increased. The ridge was occasionally so precipitous and slippery, that according to the advice of one of the guides the direction was changed, and now lay along the base of an almost perpendicular wall, 30 ft. in height. Here for the first time the ladder was employed, and placed against the rock. Our outposts had returned to this point, and inserting the rope between the two last steps of the ladder, supported it dangling in the air. At the foot of the rock stood BLATTER and LAUENER, prepared for any emergency. After we had performed the ascent in safety, the guides followed, and this manœuvre, which now brought us to better ground, was thus completed. To this ridge or "Fluh" we have given the appellation of "Leiterföhli"\*; or the ladder-ridge.

It was now a quarter before 8, and the somewhat

\* See Plate No. 2, The Leiterföhli.

fatiguing scramble rendered some slight refreshment desirable. At 8 o'clock, however, the ascent was resumed, and the entire party now waded through the snow, attached to the same rope. This precaution was adopted to prevent any casualty, in case of one of the party falling into some hidden chasm. During this stage, the Author observed that his walking capabilities were considerably impaired; he became more easily fatigued, breathed with difficulty, and was altogether in a "shaky" condition. At the last halt, he had remarked that he entirely lost the power of taste. He was ill, and a constant internal shiver made it obvious that it was an attack of fever. BLATTER maintained that the indisposition proceeded from the beer indulged in, though in modest quantity, the previous evening, and expressed strong disapprobation of a use of this beverage on the eve of such an undertaking as ours. Be that as it may, the consequence of this circumstance was, that the whole party was compelled to proceed more slowly, and to rest more frequently than would otherwise have been the case.

Soon after 9 o'clock we stood on the brink of the second large chasm, the same into which the avalanches of the Little Doldenhorn usually precipitate themselves from the right. This yawning abyss, the walls of which were a considerable distance apart, intersected the entire breadth of the glacier. To the left it opened on the precipice of the northern side of the mountain, whilst the extremity to the right was formed by the base of the Little Doldenhorn. The farther side of the chasm was more elevated than that on which we stood. For a while we gazed in admiration at the magnificent azure, but at the same time desperately smooth and forbidding walls of ice. Our ladder was of insufficient length to span the entire



breadth of this gulf, but was thrown across to a snow-clad ridge of ice, which rose in the centre, running parallel with the sides, and resembling a tongue protruding from the jaws of some monster. BLATTER and BISCHOF had with FELLENERG accomplished the passage in safety, and were crawling along the giddy pinnacle towards a spot whence the opposite side appeared more accessible, when an animated discussion arose among the guides. LAUENER called out to BLATTER and BISCHOF that such scrambling was break-neck work, and that it would be more prudent to proceed towards the right, towards the mountain side.

"Donnerwetter!" exclaimed BLATTER, "don't you see that mass of snow clinging to the mountain side, which may fall at any moment? If we get in its way, we shall be done for!"

"Well", said LAUENER; "then we had better turn back. I never liked the look of this confounded Doldenhorn; and I certainly shall not cross this murderous chasm." As he spoke, he again surveyed the cold, blue abyss, and slightly shuddered. The scene was indeed one of awful grandeur, and it required considerable resolution to retain our composure, and banish the thought of the fearful consequences of a fall into these unfathomable depths.

But we would not hear of entirely abandoning the enterprise. We called upon the guides to decide which route was attended with least danger, and the majority were in favour of that which traversed the course of the impending avalanche. We had by degrees found that, owing to the recent fall of rain, the snow was more compact than we had hoped. But for this circumstance, we could not have ventured to run the risk of crossing the path of this massive, overhanging avalanche, which would infallibly have precipi-

tated the entire party into the abyss, had it become detached at the moment of our transit. The reader may therefore imagine that this hazardous spot was passed with the utmost possible caution and speed.

We felt vastly relieved, when, at 20 minutes before 10 o'clock, we had fairly passed the dreaded gorge, and stood on the upper portion of the glacier, the crevasses of which presented comparatively little difficulty. The ladder was therefore left behind, in a nook protected against avalanches.

Now commenced by far the most arduous portion of the climbing. The slope of the glacier was extremely precipitous, and at every step we sank up to the knees in the soft snow. An hour and a half of this work was a most severe trial to the Author, whose strength occasionally almost entirely deserted him; but the thought, that he, who had in former summers triumphantly surmounted the Wetterhorn and Finsteraarhorn, should now be ignominiously worsted by the less formidable Doldenhorn, enabled him successfully to contend with the fever and exhaustion.

In addition to the incentives of ambition, the magnificence of the scene which began to unfold itself could not fail to stimulate us to fresh exertion. We still continued to skirt the base of the Little Doldenhorn, a wall of snow declining towards the north-east. A brilliant June sun bathed the granulous snow with the most dazzling, silvery light. We now approached the ridge situated between the two peaks of the Doldenhorn, both of which, as well as the ridge itself, were clothed in a mantle of spotless purity, not even desecrated by a single stone. To the left glittered the not less resplendent Blümlisalp horn, the most commanding peak of

this mountain region. If, during the intervals of repose, we directed our looks towards the north, towards the mountains which enclose the valleys of the Kander and Frutigen, towards Thun and Bern, we could distinguish but little of these districts; yet this was no great subject of regret. It is a well-known fact that from such altitudes — we were now upwards of 10,000 ft. above the sea-level — the prospect of the plain ceases to be attractive; its characteristic forms are no longer discernible, and present the aspect of a faint, colourless map. But in this case a shroud of fog enveloped all the lower mountains, and with a remarkable evenness encircled our Horn to the height of 8000 ft., frequently varying in its fantastic, kaleidoscopic forms. We were thus entirely secluded from the profane world beneath, and seemed to have been exalted to the holiest sanctuary of the creation, where the angel of the everlasting snow hovers in brilliant splendour over his domain, and bountifully bestows his refreshing springs on the world below. The numerous choir of mountains, which raised their crests above the mantle, solemnly assisted in the celebration of these superterrestrial rites.

This sublime spectacle became fully revealed, when at 10 minutes after 10 we attained the snowy ridge between the two peaks, which afforded a view towards the Gasterthal. Here too the mist surged in the depths, and from its grey billows rose with overpowering majesty the huge Balmhorn, which for some moments seemed to rivet our gaze. This mountain is of a conical shape, with broad base and lofty shoulders, whence the extreme peak rises precipitously, and with uniform slope on either side; from the shoulders descend huge glaciers of the most varied size and form. The Altels, though generally considered more important, leans as humbly

against this giant, as Adalgisa on the shoulder of the great Druidess.

And now, ye warriors, strain every nerve! Now commences our struggle to reach the very heart of the icy fastness of the Doldenhorn.

More than an hour was spent in wading through the deep snow of the highest pyramid. The Little Horn gradually decreased, but the Balmhorn, as well as the Alps of the Valais still towered above us far and near; a vast world lay extended at our feet; at the same time, however, the mists beneath us presented a somewhat troubled aspect, which stimulated us to the utmost exertion. On, on, ye fortunate, else the grey clouds will rise over your heads.

At 5 minutes past 11 o'clock our goal was attained, and the Great Doldenhorn for the first time trodden by human feet. The mountain spirit was duly apprised of this fact by the most extravagant and heathenish shouts and yells, raised by FELLEBERG and the guides. The Author, thoroughly exhausted, threw himself on the snow, taking care however, like a skilful actor when falling dead on the stage, to select a locality whence he could at his ease survey the entire scene. Thus, for example, he could almost simultaneously view the two awfully grand precipices visible from the summit of the Horn. If a hard-boiled egg be cut longitudinally into four equal and similar parts, and one of the pieces again transversely divided into two, one of the latter portions, placed on one of its three superficies will serve to convey an idea to the reader of the shape of the summit of the Great Doldenhorn. The angular extremity points towards the north-east; one of the vertical surfaces descends to a depth of upwards of 6500 ft. to the Oeschinenensee; the other,

less profound but equally precipitous, declines to the southern pedestal of the mountain; whilst the vaulted external surface of the section of the egg would represent the remaining and accessible portion of the Horn.

On the summit of this arched superficies bivouacked the victorious pioneers, after having first carefully ascertained where the snow rested on a sure foundation, and where it only formed part of a treacherous avalanche, hovering over the abyss. The merry goblet then circulated freely among the little band. Meanwhile the huge national flag of Switzerland was unfurled, and its staff planted as securely in the snow as the circumstances permitted. As soon as this was accomplished, FELLEBERG, grasping a corner of the unfurled flag with the staff in his left hand, with his right poured a libation of the choicest juice of the grape on the mountain crest, and solemnly christened it in the name of its conquerors "The Great Doldenhorn". The national Swiss hymn: "Rufst du, mein Vaterland", was then enthusiastically struck up with due emphasis, and at the same moment the white cross on its red ground fluttered proudly over the snowy abysses.

This inauguration ceremony produced a profound impression on the guides, whose emotion was similar to that created by some solemn religious rite. The goblet was then circulated right jovially, and did not fail to elicit an outpouring of songs of the most miscellaneous description, convivial, sentimental and patriotic.

The Author, notwithstanding his fever, meanwhile revelled in the superb spectacle before him. A special characteristic of the views from the summits of the Bernese Alps is the combination of an imposing foreground with the most unbounded distant prospect; and this characteristic the Great Dolden-

horn possesses in an eminent degree. The misty shroud already mentioned moreover rendered our situation a singularly peculiar one. The eye roved uninterruptedly down to the giddy depths of the Oeschinensee, into the abyss towards the east, and over the Freundhorn to the glacier walls of the bold Blümlisalphorn. This is an icy wilderness, exhibiting the most grotesque forms, at which we were never weary of gazing. The only material deprivation occasioned by the fog was the probably imposing view of the Tschingel Glacier to the west, and the Lötschengrat; but we were amply indemnified by the overwhelming majesty of the giants which rose from the clouds, — peaks innumerable, and each differing from the other. Once more appeared the huge Balmhorn with the Altels, overtopped in their turn by the not far distant Nesthorn and Bietschhorn towards the left, the latter of which exceeds 12,800 ft. in height. The most stupendous view, however, was that towards the east of the entire domain of the Bernese Alps, the chain leading from the Tschingelhorn to the Jungfrau. There rose the Jungfrau herself in all her majesty, at her side the Eiger, like a bold esquire; at some distance to the right, the formidable-looking, colossal Aletschhorn, and still more distant, in the centre of the chain, the peak of the Finsteraarhorn, towering above all. These summits, too, all appeared to float on the surface of the ocean of mist, rising however with their distinguishing characteristics many thousand feet above the grey billows, their crests flooded with the most brilliant sunshine.

Beyond the nearer peaks, all was once more veiled in fog. To the south and south-west alone emerged anew the highest chain of our quarter of the globe, the Pennine Alps. Adjacent to the Mischabel, Monte Rosa now became visible,

with its "Höchste Spitze" or highest peak, frequently termed the "Dufourspitze" after the eminent Swiss general of that name, the originator of an admirable topographic map of Switzerland. Next appeared the invincible Matterhorn, the graceful Weisshorn, the gigantic Combin, and finally, in a direct line above the snowy cone of the Altels, Mont Blanc. We have only mentioned the most important names, but it may be added that each of these giants was revealed with the most exquisite distinctness; moreover the entire Pennine range was observed to differ in a marked degree from the frigid pallor of the Bernese mountains in the tender roseate hue diffused over its summits by an Italian sun.

Towards the north a boundless ocean of mist, an emblem of eternity, from which occasionally emerged a mountain peak, like some rocky islet, again to sink into the profound depths. The clouds then commenced to surge tumultuously to and fro. Such perhaps was the aspect of the chaotic earth, when the Creator issued His mighty decree: "Be created!" — then vanished the waters and the mists, from the mire rose mountain and valley, from field and meadow sprang the verdant crop, the loftiest mountains donned their glittering glacier-garb, whilst the genial sun illumined their crests with imperishable glory. So on this day shone the mightiest of the Alps, from the Finsteraarhorn to Mont Blanc, in the glory of the mid-day sun, high, high, like ourselves, above the mists of the plain.

The heavens were remarkably propitious, and permitted us to enjoy the sublime spectacle as long as we could endure the low temperature which now gradually fell from  $36\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  Fahr. to the freezing point. At 10 minutes before 12, several streaks of fog ascended towards us from the Gasterthal; we

at once prepared for the descent, and before long were enveloped in a dense sea of mist. This, however, did not impede our progress, or prevent us from even running occasionally. The great chasm, where we had left the ladder, was very soon reached, and the party again crept stealthily and expeditiously over the crevasse and avalanche-path.

In the mean time we had arrived at a firm conviction that the snow in the lower regions — thanks, as already observed, to the rain of the previous day — possessed a much greater firmness than we were at first disposed to believe. There was, therefore, no great danger to be feared in crossing the lower chasm, which we had avoided in the ascent; and as the route thither was considerably shorter, easier and pleasanter than that over the "Leiterföhli", we determined to adopt it. Again the party glided blithely down the snow, whilst BISCHOF constantly played the clown for our benefit. He had taken possession of the ladder, employed it as a sledge, and with the most break-neck audacity dashed with it from one crevasse to another. His conveyance, however, being 22 ft. in length, occasionally proved unmanageable, and man and ladder would perform ludicrous evolutions, eliciting many an uncouth grimace from the daring artiste.

As we approached the great lower chasm, BISCHOF's jesting humour, as well as the somewhat boisterous spirits of the entire party, received a serious check. The fearful icy abysses which yawned to our right and left plainly proved how much we were indebted to the snow-bridges, and what madness it would have been to have put their firmness unduly to the proof. The laughing and singing party were instantaneously plunged into the most solemn gravity, and stole in breathless silence between the awful gulfs. The indescribable



beauty of one of these produced a never to be forgotten impression. A vault of the purest, bluest ice extended inwardly from the surface in a vast arch down to an unfathomable depth, finally losing itself in the profoundest night; from its roof were suspended white icicles of the most fantastic forms, like teeth in the jaws of some monster, and from the depths of the gulf rose several snow-clad icebergs, resembling blood-thirsty, protruded tongues. This picture of awful grandeur rivetted our astonished gaze for a considerable time, till horror at the thought that but a thin crust of ice separated us from the abyss at length induced us speedily to quit the spot.

To convey an idea of the rapidity of the descent, it may be mentioned that at half past 12 o'clock, scarcely 50 minutes after we had quitted the summit, we arrived at the spot below the Leiterflühli, where during the ascent we had rested at a quarter before 8. Here we again rested for three quarters of an hour. At a quarter past 1 we resumed the descent, and traversed the great lower chasin; at 10 minutes past 2 the moraine was attained, where the party disengaged themselves from the rope. The ladder was also taken to pieces, and the steps carefully concealed among the stones, to be employed for the same purpose on some future occasion. The entire ladder could not be left, as it would have been too much exposed to the influence of the weather to constitute a desirable bequest to our successors. The concealed steps, however, may prove of service to them or their guides, as the simple stem of a tree can be transported with far greater facility than was our ready-made ladder. Our stem was presented to Ogi, who in his turn performed various uncouth antics with the unwieldy log, employing it as a broomstick

to ride upon, or as a sledge to convey him down the rapid decline.

The descent of the stony slope was a somewhat fatiguing business, and during two hours put feet and knees severely to the proof. About 4 o'clock we reached the Byberalp, and at 5 marched singing into Kandersteg, to the no small admiration of the villagers, whose former doubts as to our competence for the exploit were now completely dispelled by the Doldenhorn flag.

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# THE WEISSE FRAU.

### **The Weisse Frau.**

**T**he Blümlisalp or Frau presents its magnificent front to the north-west, in the direction of Thun and Bern. It is the most enormous mass of the Bernese chain, exceeding even the celebrated Jungfrau in magnitude; but whereas the latter culminates in the shape of a pyramid, the Blümlisalp assumes a broad form, affording space for no less than seven distinct summits. The entire group is visible from Bern, and consists of three lofty peaks with which a fourth and lower one is connected towards the west, and exactly in front of the three higher. rise three lower summits, like the foremost rank of a phalanx, as they await on their knees the attack of the hostile cavalry. Singular to relate, the otherwise excellent map of DUFOUR gives the names of the three lesser summits, but of the fourth and two of the higher peaks only the altitude, whilst of the lofty summit to the east, both appellation and altitude are altogether omitted. We shall therefore be obliged in order to ensure the perspicuity of the following descriptions, and avoid circumlocution, to supply names to meet this deficiency, in extenuation of which course we may add that we invariably adhere to names already employed, and to natural

circumstances, and that several native mountaineers, whose opinion we value, have signified their approbation of our nomenclature. According to this the Blümlisalp\* numbers the following seven peaks.

1) The Morgenhorn, *i. e.* the lofty summit farthest to the east, which on DUFOUR's map is without name or altitude, and according to our computation, measures about 11,733 ft.

2) The Weisse Frau, *i. e.* the central summit, which commands the entire Blümlisalp on all sides; its altitude is 12,021 ft.

3) The Blümlisalphorn, that is the lofty summit to the westward, the highest of all, bearing a decided resemblance to a horn; altitude 12,051 ft.

4) Further westward the masses of the Blümlisalp descend to the Oeschinenhorn, the base of which is washed by the Oeschinensee; altitude 11,466 ft.

Returning from west to east we encounter the three smaller or foremost points, which already bear recognised names, viz:

5) The Rothhorn, rising immediately in front of the Blümlisalphorn; altitude 10,836 ft.

6) The Blümlisalpstock, directly in front of the Weisse Frau, altitude 10,573 ft.

7) The Wilde Frau, rising before the Morgenhorn; altitude 10,711 ft.\*\*

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\* See Plate No. 4, The Seven Peaks of the Blümlisalp.

\*\* It may not be out of place here to mention the somewhat singular fact, that the extinct Mexican volcano Iztaccihuatl (15,772 ft.; *iztac* = white, *cihuatl* = woman) bears a striking resemblance in form as well as appellation to the Weisse Frau.

Morgenhorn.  
Wilde Frau.

Blindlaufstock.  
Weiße Frau. Schwaufglocke.

Bimtsaufhorn. Zuthorn. Gucksteinhorn.



Buchhühner.

Schwarze Fels.

Alpen v. Hoch. 1894.

Die sieben Gipfel der Blindlaufalp.

The seven Peaks of the Bimtsalp.

The enormous masses of glacier and perpetual snow which encircle the pinnacles of this mountain, have, until very recently, deterred the most adventurous from an ascent, and those who considered it feasible, believed that the attempt could only be made on the south side. The young and intrepid M. M. EDMUND v. FELLEBERG, PHILIPP GOSSET and HANS v. HALLWYL of Bern, did not entirely concur in this view. Encouraged by the circumstance, that in recent times a number of mountains have been overcome, at the mere mention of which men formerly crossed themselves, they resolved, in the year 1859, to make a first attempt upon the yet untrodden Frau, by proceeding straight across her brilliant couch of glaciers and perpetual snow.

On the morning of Aug. 26th of the above-mentioned year, they left Bern and repaired to Lauterbrunnen, in order to instal as chief guide, CHRISTEN LAUENER, to whom FELLEBERG had already imparted the secret. LAUENER took with him as second guide JOHANN BISCHOF, and as porters PFISTER, FEUTZ und v. ALMEN, all of Lauterbrunnen. The same evening the ascent to Mürren was made. The following day was utterly unpropitious for the beginning of the great undertaking, the bad weather confining the little band to Sterchi's hotel. This involuntary rest was employed by the travellers in perfecting the necessary apparatus: a glacier-ladder of 20 ft. long was constructed, an old red curtain was nailed to a huge pole by way of banner, blankets were rolled up for probable bivouacs, and the supply of wine and provisions increased, so as, in case of need, to suffice for several days.

The travellers were unable to proceed further, till late on the morning of Aug. 28th. They then crossed the Furggepass to the Kienthal, the sun occasionally breaking through the

mist which had settled on the mountain tops, and agreeably refreshed by a thunder-shower. At 5 p. m. they reached the chalet on the Bundalp. It unfortunately cannot be related that the party here met with that hospitality which is usually so readily dispensed in the cottages of the Alps. The inmates of the chalet refused at first even to admit the travellers and their attendants, and it needed all the diplomatic skill of Bischof, as well as satisfactory explanations with regard to the pecuniary part of the business, ere the stolid mountaineers could be prevailed upon to evacuate their dwelling, and take up their abode for the night in a neighbouring hut. Once obtained, however, the capacious cottage proved an excellent basis of operation for the subsequent undertakings. It consisted of two divisions, first an outer room in which a fireplace, and huge cheese-kettle, together with abundant stores of milk and of wood, held a prominent place, whilst on the floor a large quantity of hay offered an ample couch for the guides and porters. From this room a door opened into a smaller apartment, comfortable and well-panelled, in which a gigantic bed, two benches and a table, afforded the three travellers satisfactory accommodation.

### First Attempts.

On Aug. 29th, as the sky had cleared, with the exception of some insignificant clouds towards the plain, the day was devoted to reconnoitring the Blümlisalp. At 5 o'clock in the morning, the party, leaving the greater part of their stores behind, set out for the Oeschinengrat, which they reached



after traversing for two hours fragments of slate, and fields of snow. As they here scanned the broad masses of the Blümlisalp, it appeared advisable to attack the central peak, especially as its base seemed easy of access between the Wilde Frau and the Blümlisalpstock. They therefore skirted the western slope of the ridge towards the Hochthürli, where the rocky ridge is somewhat sharply wedged into the glacier. Meanwhile they discovered a cavity in the rock, admirably adapted for the preservation of such stores as could be dispensed with during the grand assault, and eventually for a night-bivouac, with a view to which they had taken the precaution of bringing wood and blankets with them.

Where the glacier, imbedded between the Wilde Frau and the Blümlisalpstock, divides at the Oeschinengrat, and sends one arm in the direction of Kienthal and another towards the highest terraces of the Oeschinen Alps, the party came upon the glacier itself. The three travellers, the two guides and one of the porters bound themselves together with a rope, 70 ft. in length. LAUENER marched first, as head-pioneer, and the two remaining porters, with the ladder on their shoulders, brought up the rear. Ascending to the upper portion of the great glacier, they passed close under the snowy precipices of the Wilde Frau, on almost level ground, which, however, soon terminated, and vast crevasses yawned before them, whose fragile snow-bridges demanded the utmost caution. More than once, one or other of the party sank up to the breast, whilst his feet dangled in the empty space of a chasm, until the rope, drawn by the foremost and hindmost of the party assisted him in regaining his footing. The ladder they had brought, proved invaluable in several places. After some time the universal attention was

drawn to an unusually large crevasse, which opened to the width of about 40 ft., and extending from 1400 to 1600 ft. in length, intersected almost the entire tract between the Blümlisalpstock and the Wilde Frau. Gigantic icicles, resembling the pipes of an organ, were suspended in the fathomless azure of the open glacier. But for the immense snow-bridges which in some places overhung the chasm, there would have been no means of crossing it, and even these bridges required to be used with all precaution. Where the snow appeared least calculated to bear, the ladder was extended in order to distribute over a wider area the weight of each adventurer crawling across, whilst the rope which held him was tightly strained at either extremity, in order to keep him, as it were, suspended, and thus diminish his weight. The first and the last were necessarily excepted, as they could receive aid from the rope on one side only.

Thanks to these precautions, the whole party succeeded in passing unscathed along the precarious suspension-bridge. They then had to ascend a small snow-hill, and on gaining its summit a magnificent field of snow lay before the eyes of the enraptured travellers. From its further verge rose the majestic triangular pyramid of the Weisse Frau, which on clear days glitters like silver as far as the northern plain.

"Now for the rock!" commanded LAUENER.

The travellers now first perceived, at the base of the western side of the pyramid, a miniature wall of rock, which rose out of the snow, the only stone visible amidst the unsullied whiteness of this world of glaciers, and without delay, they hastened to traverse the field, towards the right. But ere the rock could be gained, another crevasse must be crossed. This encircled the base of the snow-pyramid like



The 29th of August.

the moat of a castle around its bastion, but was fortunately of inconsiderable width, the chief difficulty being that its further side rose about 16 feet higher than the nearer one. The ladder, consequently, being placed slanting across the chasm, was barely long enough, and it needed all the nimbleness of Bischof to step securely from the upper extremity of the ladder upon the vaulted ice. Having performed this feat in safety, he facilitated the passage of the others, by drawing them towards him by means of the rope. It was

almost ludicrous to see one after another creep like a cat across the ladder, which somewhat resembled the entrance to a dove-cot. When the last had crossed, he drew the ladder after him, and within a few minutes they had reached the wall of rock which we term the Schnapsfluh (Brandy-rock) as they partly here fortified themselves for the last time from the spirit-flask, previous to the final assault.

This spot was attained at 11 o'clock. Threateningly, and at the same time alluringly, the western side of the snow-triangle rose straight before the eyes of the intrepid travellers, indicating the way to the summit of the Weisse Frau.\* A solemn silence pervaded the glaciers, disturbed occasionally as a gust of wind swept over their rigid surface; whilst from the Lake of Thun and the Kienthal, dark and heavy clouds of mist rolled upwards.

As if to outrun the mists, and reach the goal before them, our travellers hastened across the little ridge which still separated them from the pyramid, and then set foot upon its side. But this was of pure ice, and presented, even in the most accessible part of its base, an inclination of at least 45 degrees.

"Now for the axes!"

And now they began to hack the ice so vigorously, that the sparks flew around. Not a foot could be set down without a new step being cut for it, and so desperately smoothly did the icy surface slope down from the ridge to the right and left, that a single false step would have been destruction. Small crevasses also impeded the progress of the bold adventurers, but were traversed with little ceremony.

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\* See Plate No. 5, The Weisse Frau.

Wiese front

Hinterlandphorn



An 29. Aug. um 1. Sept. erreichte Höhe.  
Point attained Aug. 29, Sept 1

The "Schnapsfluh".

Die Schnapsfluh.

Thus the column slowly and cautiously worked its way for more than two hours up the ridge in single file. Steeper and narrower became the path at every step, whilst the arms of the workmen began to relax, the mists which had long been rolling up to grow denser, and a cutting wind to whistle through the clouds!

"Excelsior! Excelsior!" was still the cry.

Once more they set to, and hewed for another hour. Fifteen hundred steps had been accomplished, when a storm at last burst over their devoted heads; a cutting blast swept across the ridge, benumbing the fingers of the pioneers, whilst, to complete the discomfiture of the party, a fall of snow completely enveloped them. To proceed farther would have been culpable rashness. LAUENER indeed, from the beginning of the third hour, had sounded a retreat, but had met with no response. He now protested decidedly against a further ascent. He had climbed through the mist about 80 steps higher than the rest of the party, and announced that the summit of the pyramid was there indeed, but also that an ugly ridge of ice, desperately precipitous, stretched away out of sight, far up into the mist.

'Three hours' labour, fifteen hundred steps cut, so near the goal, and yet to be obliged to turn back — such are the caprices of the mountain spirit! But a genuine mountaineer flinches not even at such moments, and whistles away misfortune itself.

The descent was no small labour. Every step, even those last cut, had been covered by the drifting snow. BISCHOF was sent down first, to sweep it off. Then he and one of the guides who remained above, at the distance of about 70 feet, held the rope between them. One man at a

time now descended the uncovered steps, whilst the tightly-stretched rope served as a kind of balustrade. When the last had descended, the same operation began anew, and was repeated 52 times ere the base of the pyramid was reached. During this period, an incessant snow-storm lashed the faces of the unfortunates, and a perfect hurricane more than once took away their breath.

Exhausted, frozen and battered, the party reached the Schnapsfluh about 4 in the afternoon, and were much refreshed by the wine, which they had there left behind. They then hastened to continue the descent, especially as the sky was gracious enough for a short period to disperse the mists on the more level part of the glacier, where the above mentioned crevasses lay, though only to recommence its dreary winter-work shortly after. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 8 in the evening, the chalet was again peopled, and its blazing fire shone on the party, whose spirits their misadventures had not succeeded in quenching. They then partook of some soup prepared by BISCHOF, and reviewed the adventures of the day amidst the smoke of the fragrant weed, and finally retired to rest at a very late hour.

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"Donnerwetter! What is to be done?" — With this agreeable morning-salutation, one of the guides entered the gentlemen's apartment in the chalet, at a tolerably advanced hour on Aug. 30th, in a way peculiarly his own to announce to the sound sleepers that they might sleep still longer. The good LAUENER might be excused for his uncouth greeting. There raged so tremendous, so un-August-like a storm, that he involuntarily desired to awaken the sympathy of the others.

The sky showered down its densest flakes over the green meadows, all traces of summer were here obliterated, the Alpine flowers were destroyed, and pale and drooping hung their bells, whilst here and there a bewildered butterfly hovered feebly over the snow. What else could the party do on such a day, but, under the auspices of all good spirits, to kill the time as best they might? Coffee was prepared, and long lingered over, then slices of cheese were toasted with scrupulous accuracy, and every device resorted to in order to prolong the meal till late in the forenoon. A repast so thoroughly enjoyed, must also be completely digested. The company accordingly betook themselves to the open air, and waged a fierce combat with snow-balls — sanguinary was the encounter, for BISCHOF struck FELLENERG so sharply on the left ear that the latter rested not till he had wreaked his vengeance on his adversary, by knocking his pipe out of his mouth with such vigour that the teeth of the audacious master-tailor are possibly shaky to this day. When the icy cold had forced them to desist, and to declare a truce, they again repaired to the precincts of the chalet, where, with the aid of one of the beams of the house, and a ladder, feats of gymnastics were performed, which only lacked the laurel-wreath awarded to the victor, bestowed by the fair hands of some festively-attired maiden. They then filled their pipes, and threw themselves down on the hay, where they indulged in a conversation on the most profound topics. Meanwhile BISCHOF, who combined the skill of a cook with the art of a conjuror, had again concerted a glorious bowl of soup, after imbibing which, slices of cheese were once more toasted by way of dessert, and lastly, that all proper forms should be rigorously complied with, café noir was handed round in a



milk-pan, out of which the gentlemen and the attendants alike partook.

Thus passed the first morning of the siege of the Blüm-lisalp. After dinner, BISCHOF and FEUTZ were dispatched to the village of Reichenbach, in order to supply the exhausted commissariat by fresh purchases. The remainder of the party meanwhile resorted to various expedients to pass away the time: GOSSET availed himself of a clear moment, to take a sketch of the Wilde Frau and the Morgenhorn;\* HALLWYL, in vain strove to extract smoke from a pipe which resisted all his efforts; FELLENER attempted to scan the future by an attentive study of the changes of the wind. Evening came, then night, and it was time for supper, which consisted of scraps of ham and a most heterogeneous soup, together with the eternal toasted cheese; after supper LAUENER entertained the party with some of his chamois-hunting adventures, whilst without the wind howled most dismally. It was now 9 o'clock in the evening, and still no BISCHOF appeared. As his punctuality could be relied on, conjectures were indulged in that he and his companion had lost their way in the dismal fog. No sooner were the gloomy forebodings uttered than it was determined to make an effort to rescue them. Long faggots were kindled and waved about like torches outside the chalet; the whole party simultaneously burst into a stentorian shout, whilst LAUENER uttered the shrill whistle of the chamois hunter, which seemed to penetrate to the very brain. The whistle, which probably sounded furthest, was effectual, and was immediately responded to by a faint shout, in which the voice of BISCHOF was instantly recognized.

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\* See Plate No. 6, The Morgenhorn and Wilde Frau.

Morgenhorn

Wilde Frau

Hochbühlgrut



*Morgenhorn u. Wilde Frau von der Bundalp aus.*

*Morgenhorn and Wilde Frau from the Bundalp.*

'They have lost their way; we must seek them', said LAUENER to one of the porters.

Two great pine-torches were forthwith lighted, amidst the waving of which and continued shouting, the two men set out, and were soon lost in the pitchy darkness. They paused from time to time, to listen for some response, but the echo of the numerous rocks around, carried the sound of BISCHOF's voice to the ear of his deliverers in such various directions, that it was a considerable time ere they found the right one. Having at last discovered and followed it, they stopped at the verge of a little "Fluh" which rose before them. One more whistle, and LAUENER perceived that those they sought were at the base of the precipice. It now cost no small trouble to throw them the rope so that they could catch it; they however succeeded at last, and soon after 10 o'clock, the garrison of the chalet was again complete. They now leisurely sipped the new acquisition of wine, whilst BISCHOF related his adventures, which, now the danger was over, he savoured with his usual comic ingredients. He narrated that in going to Reichenbach and in returning, all had gone well, with the single drawback that in the whole village they could procure no meat. But in a place where a precipitous path from the lower to the upper Alp intersected a wood, the returning foragers imagined that in the dark they had strayed into a desolate stony tract, where they were obliged to go on all-fours; believing they were too far to the left they now turned their steps in the opposite direction. They had then walked briskly for a full hour over a rugged mountain pasture, and hoped every moment to find the chalet. As they wandered in the dark, they exhausted their whole repertoire of shouting, singing, whistling — no answer. It was so pitch-dark, that in order not to lose one another, they

went on hand in hand. Suddenly they came to a perpendicular wall of rock, and at the same moment, to their utter consternation, perceived by the sound of a rushing brook beneath, they were in a dilemma in which a single step backwards or forwards, threatened certain destruction. Once more they shouted, screamed, whistled — again with no better result. They then made up their minds to pass the night on this inhospitable spot. They refreshed themselves with some of the bread and wine they had brought with them, and then crouched down on the rock, keeping close together for mutual warmth, like barn-owls in their nest. They had sat thus for about half-an-hour, when BISCHOF heard LAUENER's whistle, and answered with a loud shout; for half-an-hour more the two exchanged their different calls, till the wanderers at length saw the torches of their deliverers waving over their heads.

The two adventurers were indemnified by an ample supper, and need it be added that the libation was protracted to a late hour?

Aug. 31st was worse, if possible, than the preceding day: till 10 o'clock in the morning, a dense fog, towards noon, rain mingled with snow, in the afternoon a regular snow-storm. The herdsman collected his cattle, which could no longer find sustenance here, and drove them towards the ample stores of hay of the lower terraces. On departing, he presented his guests with a bill for which they could have been comfortably entertained for three days in the first hotel at Interlaken. They therefore at once cancelled a third of the sum, threw to this worthy son of the Alps the remaining two thirds, which still more than doubled the sum to which he was strictly entitled, and bestowed on him a parting benediction. The herdsman, who was gifted with the worst qualities of an Italian

vetturino, swept up the money with a smirk of satisfaction, and in his turn wished the party adieu.

They had now abundance of wine and bread, as well as cheese and milk; but the stores of meat were entirely exhausted. The proposal to buy a sheep from the neighbouring shepherd at the Gamchi, was therefore hailed with acclamation, and LAUENER, being a connoisseur, was entrusted with the important transaction. For the sum of 17 fr. he procured a plump young sheep, which he slaughtered and skinned in the most approved method. BISCHOF again undertook the culinary department, and presented for dinner the following bill of fare:

Soupe au beurre, au lait, au fromage et au bouillon de mouton.

Gigot de mouton.

Fried liver with slices of bread, au beurre frais.

Slices of toasted cheese.

Mulled Wine.

Une demi-guepse.

The entire afternoon till 8 p. m. was occupied in cooking the remnant of the new acquisition, and the party was still in possession of 20 lbs. of excellent mutton. Attracted by the fragrant vapours which emanated from the cuisine, the entire swinish population which had been left behind on the Alp, assailed the encampment with eager snouts. Imagining that the unclean spirit of covetousness which had possessed the herdsman had entered into this herd, the besieged determined on a hostile sally, and a well-directed, unremitting fire of snowballs soon put the assailants to rout, who grunting and galloping off with the orthodox curl in their tails, were fain to seek refuge in a hut lower down. "There is no eating roast

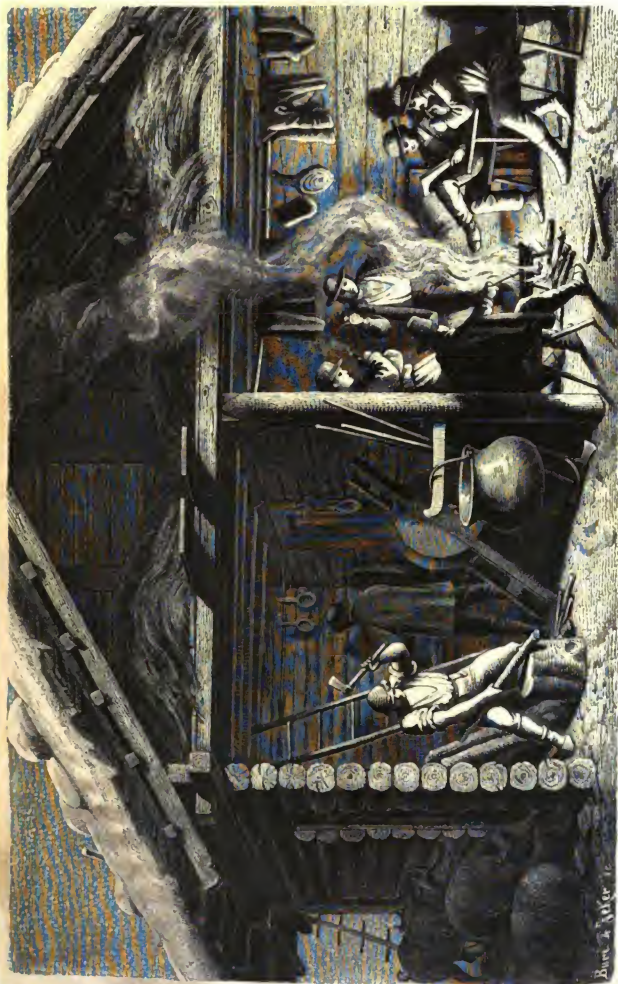
mutton with those gentlemen!" was doubtless the sage reflection of the vanquished quadrupeds, at the close of the contest.\*

Towards evening the continually falling snow assumed a crystalline hardness, the air became intensely cold, the clouds rested peacefully on the mountain tops; a sure sign of the approach of fine weather. When night came on, the Bise (north-east wind) was blowing strongly, dispersing the already decreasing masses of fog, and shortly afterwards a magnificent starry heaven was unfolded to view, beneath which stood the ghost-like forms of the mountains, in their fresh garb of snow. It was time to prepare for a second attack on the Weisse Frau. This brilliant night however, was at the same time so bitterly cold that the guides were driven one by one from their couch of hay to the other apartment, where a blazing fire diffused its genial warmth.

On the morning of Sept. 1st there needed no reveille, for the whole party were up by 4 o'clock, fortifying themselves against the projected assault with a draught of hot coffee. A bitter cold reigned without, and the snow, which lay 8 inches deep on the mountain, had hardened into a granulous powder. All their resources in the way of warm clothing were brought forth out of the common wardrobe, and put in requisition: woollen stockings, for example, made some amends to HALLWYL for his totally insufficient gloves, whilst the skins of sheep and of chamois lent to the guides the air of Samoides. BISCHOF, with his wonted humour, had rendered his appearance sufficiently comical by donning the skin of an old chamois, which down to the very locality of the defunct animal's tail, suited

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\* See Plate No. 7, The Chalet on the Bundalp.



THE CHALET ON THE BUNDALP.

him admirably. The equipments of the party being thus duly completed, and a modest quantum of Kirschwasser imbibed, they again set out on their wintry journey.



The first of September.

The morning dawned brilliantly, and as the travellers ascended the Oeschinengrat, the surrounding mountains glittered, as if sprinkled with powdered crystal, in the yellow morning-light. Even the minor peaks of the Kienthal, as far down as the Niesen, each wore a snowy crest, and only on the more distant plains, could the eye perceive, from the verdure of the meadows and foliage, that the reign of summer was not yet over. On the Oeschinengrat, indeed, all wore a different aspect. The snow-drift lay from 2 to 3 ft. in depth, and so cutting a blast blew over the high crest, that the faces of the travellers were perpetually lashed as with tiny needles of ice. It proved a task of some difficulty to find the cavity in the



Oeschinengrat, so much had the snow blocked up the entrance; the ladder there concealed was frozen to the rock, and when subsequently handled, adhered to the hands. On the glacier, which the party traversed at 8 o'clock, the snow lay on an average 3 ft. deep, which was so far an advantage as the snow-bridges over the now scarcely visible crevasses were thus rendered more solid. The travellers were however, now compelled to wade continually up to the knees in snow. The route of Aug. 29th was again pursued. On the level snowfield at the foot of the pyramid, the sun shone forth brilliantly, to the hearty satisfaction of the benumbed adventurers, who had only been preserved by constant motion from the extremity of cold.

At half-past 10 the "Schnapsfluh" was reached, and the party gazed with rapture on the majestic cone of the Weisse Frau. LAUENER alone wore a thoughtful countenance.

"Do you see", he inquired, "those bright little clouds which dance so wildly around the summit of the Weisse Frau?"

"Those are not clouds, the weather is splendid to day, you old croaker!"

"They are mountain sprites, and if they do not finish their dance before we get down, we shall have to draw in our horns a second time."

They were the so-called "Guxeten", which are produced by a dry sharp wind which raises the countless particles of loose snow, causing them to eddy around the mountain crests. When the human face or hand comes in contact with one of these icy whirlwinds, it feels as if lashed by a thousand needles, and cannot long endure the castigation, for neither veil nor glove are impervious to these points. But the three young glacier-travellers were not yet sufficiently experienced in the pitiless severity of these "Guxeten", and therefore resolutely gave orders to proceed.

BISCHOF and the porter FEUTZ were commanded to begin their hewing labours on the well-known western side of the triangular pyramid; for the fall of snow had effected no change in this quarter: whatever snow may have fallen on the narrow ridge, had long since been swept off into the vast chasms of the glaciers to the right and left, and the solid ice was exposed as before. The two pioneers wielded their axes lustily, when suddenly a white cloud intercepted them from the view of those in the rear. The latter only perceived that they prostrated themselves, in order to allow the storm to pass over them, and when the cloud had disappeared, they were again seen at work, but this time with visibly impaired energy. The phenomenon recurred four or five times, during which the bulk of the party had drawn nearer to the vanguard, after whose last and longest disappearance, Bischof declared that at this rate it would be impossible to reach the summit of the mountain, the Guxete being too violent. But even yet our travellers would not hear of turning back, and as the wind had now ceased, and the atmosphere was clear, they again pressed onwards. But very shortly a furious blast out of the glacier-abysses which yawned between the Weisse Frau and the Blümlisalhorn, swept up the icy slope, again conveying a white cloud of glittering snow, which in a moment overwhelmed the whole troop. All had thrown themselves prostrate, to protect faces and hands from the irresistible power of the acute ice needles. Although the first onslaught had almost deprived them of sight and hearing, the young men were still undaunted, and once more gave the word of command "Onward!" The guides obeyed for the last time, when immediately a blast far exceeding in fury any they had hitherto encountered, was within an ace of sweeping the whole party

into the chasm below. The hands of BISCHOF, ever in the van, were lacerated and bleeding from the ice-needles, and could no longer wield the axe; whilst the other guides and the porters refused to continue their work. All the bands of subordination were dissolved when the bravest quailed, and LAUENER now peremptorily commanded a retreat.

The party were about 300 ft. beneath the summit of the cone, but had not been able to attain the point which they had reached on Aug. 29th, but from that point upwards, the snowy mountain crest was involved in a continual vortex of drifting snow, of whose fearful power the spectator on the plains on a clear day, who perceives a graceful white veil fluttering around the mountain's crest, can form no conception. It was now of course, not merely dangerous but utterly impossible to attempt to reach the goal. At this spot the banner which was to have been so triumphant waved was buried in an unbroken silence. The descent was then continued. The natural disappointment at being a second time baffled by the mountain spirit, after so much patience, courage and perseverance, could only be described by one who had chanced to be a spectator of our noontide repast in the cavern of the Oeschinengrat. We endeavoured to drown the remembrance of our blighted hopes in the juice of the grape, and as each bottle was emptied, dashed it to pieces against the rocky wall, accompanying the action with expressions more remarkable for emphasis than propriety. But the wrathful countenances which the party wore when they reached Kandersteg, and the abashed looks with which the three weatherbeaten wanderers late one evening wended their way through the back-streets of Bern — these have not been photographed!

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## **The Ascent.**

The above-mentioned expeditions of Aug. 29th and Sept. 1st had at least the effect of proving that the Blümlisalp was by no means so inaccessible as it was popularly believed to be. The successful ascent of its two loftiest peaks was now destined soon to be accomplished. In the following year, 1860, the Blümlisalphorn, was, as already observed, vanquished by Mr. LESLIE STEPHEN. The particulars of this expedition are unknown to us, beyond the fact that the party entered upon the glacier-domain between the Wilde Frau and the Blümlisalpstock, rounded the base of the latter mountain and traversed the flat surface of the Blümlisalp Glacier in a westerly direction at the point where it appears as if reposing after its first immense leap to gather fresh strength for the descent to the Oeschinenalp. At the western extremity of the level portion of the glacier, the perilous ice-ridge had to be gained, which affords the sole means of access to the summit of the Blümlisalphorn.

The three young excursionists of 1859 were afterwards dispersed in the same year, so that no repetition of their attempt to scale the Weisse Frau could be made. Mr. WILLENER,

a medical student of Bern, availed himself of this interval to undertake a new attack, and even conceived the audacious idea of scaling the summit attended by a single guide, a man from the Kienthal. These two hardy adventurers, however, did not succeed in ascending farther than to the triangle.

Thus the summit of the Weisse Frau was, at the commencement of the summer of 1862, a still untrodden spot and consequently regarded by us as the successor of the Doldenhorn. During our involuntary delay in Kandersteg we had not more frequently directed our looks towards the latter mountain than to the Blümlisalp, and FELLEBERG especially longed to make amends for the failure of 1859. The Author, who had during the night slept off his fever, was by no means disinclined for a fresh attempt. We were, however, desirous of reducing the number of our guides, especially as we proposed to dispense with the services of a ladder. The Kandersteg guides REICHEN and OGI were accordingly paid off on July 1st with due exactitude. On this day, however, we were still in duty bound to present a report of the Doldenhorn expedition at the parsonage of Kandergrund, where we were received in the afternoon with the utmost cordiality. The pastor had, on the previous day, accompanied by another gentleman of the cloth, repaired to the Oeschinental for the purpose of observing our proceedings with the aid of a telescope. They had seen us scrambling over the snow and traversing the great crevasses, and watched us till the layer of mist, already mentioned, intercepted us from their view.

The night had, as may be easily supposed, again set in before we quitted the pastor's hospitable roof. Again the stars glittered promisingly over the precipitous rocks of the Kandergrund, and animated us with hope as we returned to the

Wilde Frau

Blumkaspigels

Reithorn

Reise-Frau

Blumkaspahorn

Anchenhorn



Fels der Birren  
Peak of the Birren.

at Herr's of the Birren.

Fels der Birren  
Peak of the Birren.

Die Blumkaspahorn vom Handersteg aus.

The Blumkaspahorn from Handersteg.

"Hôtel Victoria". This time no songs or vociferations saluted us on the road, for the guides had instructions to retire to rest betimes. We thoughtless youths alone found a variety of necessary and unnecessary preparations to be made before repairing to our rooms, the result of which was that we left ourselves barely two hours for slumber. Nevertheless we made our appearance at an early hour on the morning of July 2nd, fresh and eager for the enterprise, with axes shouldered, trousers crammed into our boots in the most approved fashion and impatiently striking the pavement with the heavy iron-shod Alpstocks, like young steeds awaiting the signal for departure.

At half past 2 o'clock we started, the beams of the morning star pleasantly illuminating our path to the Oeschinenthal. Directly before us the western side of the Blümlisalphorn expanded its imposing white summit which commands the entire neighbourhood, and is surrounded by the other peaks of the Blümlisalp like a hen in the midst of her brood: to the left the three minor peaks in succession, the Rothhorn, the Blümlisalpstock and the Wilde Frau, to the right the Oeschinenhorn and that mysterious vaulted snow-ridge in the background, occupying the gap between the Blümlisalphorn and Rothhorn, and which we now know to be the summit of the Weisse Frau. From this point, then, the Morgenhorn alone of this beautiful group is not visible, being concealed by the Rothhorn.

The Oeschinenbach by which we were now ascending rushed noisily through the darkness, and seemed to vie with the dew in moistening the surrounding meadows with its spray. Numerous streams descended from the Fisistock and the glaciers of the Doldenhorn, and dashing over the rocks, mingled their waters with the Oeschinenbach. The tops of the fir-trees

waved gently in the breeze which is usually the precursor of the break of day. All nature revelled in the freshness and joyous vigour of youth; the sun only was wanting to gild the picture. The daylight appeared an hour later, as we approached the impressively beautiful Oeschinensee. Striking indeed is this narrow rocky basin, of which only a portion is clothed with meadow and wood, whilst the remainder is occupied by the calm waters of the lake. On all sides rise precipitous walls to the height of 7000 ft.; the Blümlisalp and Doldenhorn send forth innumerable glaciers from an almost equal altitude, and from the glaciers gush some dozen brooks, all of which descend to the lake in the form of waterfalls, some of them dashing through rugged channels, others gliding like silver threads over the barren surface of the rocks. The noise of these cascades, the distant tinkling of the cattle-bells, the splash of the oar of a solitary boat and the occasional croak of the mountain raven render the scene peculiarly and solemnly impressive. Majestic splendour of eternal snow; savage grandeur of the vast glacier abysses; sweet loveliness of the calm lake and fragrant pines; never-ceasing decay of the barren, grey, weather-beaten rocks: such are the characteristics of the Oeschinen-thal, and in these contrasts lies its charm. The first glimpse of this scene cannot fail to strike the spectator with an overpowering sensation of awe, and yet loveliness is so combined with grandeur that the picture invariably excites the profoundest admiration.

This, however, was no day for lazily gliding over the calm waters; Jupiter had just appeared behind one of the mountains, admonishing us that we had a higher aim in view. At half past 3 o'clock we therefore left the lake to our right, and ascended on its northern bank towards the Oeschinen



Rothorn  
Fronthorn

Great Doldehorn.  
Gröps Doldehorn

Little Doldehorn.  
Lil Doldehorn

Doldenstock

Spitzstein



Oeschinensee

Das Doldenhorn von der Oeschinenalp aus.

The Doldenhorn from the Oeschinenalp.

Alps. One of the guides, in passing, took possession of the huge flag-staff which had been placed in readiness a few days previously, and was destined to crown the summit of the Weisse Frau.

After having ascended the bank of the lake for a considerable distance, we obtained a view of the entire northern front of the Doldenhorn, a vast and imposing mass, with its wild and precipitous glaciers; in the radiance of the morning sun glistened the twin peaks, on the higher of which, with the aid of the telescope, we could distinguish our flag, still merrily fluttering in the breeze. This front view of the Doldenhorn\* constitutes one of the most imposing mountain scenes, and may be enjoyed by pedestrians of the most moderate capabilities; it may be obtained by ascending the Oeschinengrat, or even from a point which may be reached in one hour and a half from Kandersteg.

We were now arrested in our further progress by a most remarkable spot, where the limestone wall of the Rothhorn descends perpendicularly to the lake. About 600 ft. above the surface of the water a narrow grassy ledge intersects this precipice horizontally; this is termed the "Schafschnur" (sheep-pass) or "Oeschinenschnur". It derives its name from the fact, that on the slopes of the Oeschinenhorn, amidst barren rocks and glaciers, a small number of sheep find sustenance; on some parts of the route to this perilous locality, which human beings cannot attain without the utmost difficulty, the animals must be carried. Those who can pass the Schafschnur without suffering from giddiness may confidently confront any other locality of a similar description.

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\* See Plate No 9, The Doldenhorn from the Oeschinenalp.

On the day of the ascent of the Little Doldenhorn, the weather not proving propitious for the main undertaking, FELLEBERG and GOSSET had employed their time in making an excursion round the lake. When, proceeding in a northerly direction, they had traversed the above-mentioned sheep pastures on the Oeschinenhorn, the lofty rocks of the Rothhorn rose perpendicularly before them, descending equally precipitously to the azure lake 600 ft. below.\* Those unacquainted with the locality would have formed the natural conclusion that further progress was out of the question, and that the Spirit of the mountains peremptorily commanded retreat; but here they discovered the grassy ledge of the Schafschnur, affording a precarious egress from their rocky perch. At first the ledge is several feet in breadth, and, especially as the travellers were attached to the rope, presented no great difficulty, save that it shelves downwards towards the lake, affording anything but a comfortable footing. Towards the middle of the precipice the pass diminishes in breadth, the turf disappears, the overhanging rocks obstruct the passage more and more, and the yawning abyss of 600 ft. in depth opens immediately below the feet of the clamberer. For a distance of a quarter of a mile the fearful path does not exceed a few inches in breadth, and leads over loose, slippery fragments of slate. Hands and feet have long been in requisition, but now every muscle is strained to the utmost in order to complete the break-neck passage. And not only is the pass so narrow, the footing so insecure and the precipice so perpendicular, — several rocky projections must be crept round, where at places but one foot at a time can be

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\* See Frontispiece.

planted, whilst at every step fragments of the rock are precipitated into the abyss and are heard to splash into the lake beneath, indicating the fate inevitably consequent on a loss of presence of mind. Having passed this hideous spot, the party regained the grassy ledge and descended by a comparatively easy path to the lower Oeschinenalp.

This same lower Oeschinenalp — to return to the expedition of July 2nd — we reached at 4 o'clock, after a sturdy walk of one hour and a half from Kandersteg. The cattle moved lazily towards the chalets to dispense to the herdsmen their matutinal gifts, and here we were met by our former guide CHRISTEN OGI, who regaled us with a draught of the warm beverage. Our column was then again set in motion and commenced the ascent of the terraces conducting to the upper Oeschinenalp, which we reached at 20 minutes before 5. Here we approached the base of the Blümlisalp Glacier, and beyond the rocky ridge of the Hochthürli caught a glimpse of the inviting summit of the Weisse Frau.

As there was every prospect of an unusually hot day, we indulged in a rest of very limited duration, in order that the cool morning hours might be spent to the best advantage. We accordingly lost no time in commencing the third stage, the ascent of the Schafberg, which extends to the immediate vicinity of the glaciers, and is exceeded in height towards the east by the Oeschinengrat alone, the culminating point (watershed) between the Kienthal and Oeschinenthal. At half past 5 the Schafberg was attained, and selected as an appropriate spot for our first campaigning breakfast. The scene vividly recalled to the Authors memory similar incidents which had occurred years before during his travels in Norway, and he involuntarily sought for the features of Scandinavian

mountain scenery, and the sea-green waters of the Fjords. This reminiscence could, however, only be realized by the view to the north of the green Alpine pastures, but was speedily dispelled by a glance southwards of the gleaming, snowy majesty of the Blümlisalp, enthroned in the midst of the Alps. Over our heads hovered a flock of ptarmigans, or grouse of the Alps, apparently mocking the impotence of the would be sportsmen. The sun now appeared above the highest snow-ridge of the Blümlisalp, and shed its warmth over the group at their repast.

"Pioneers! eyes front! march!"

Nothing loth, we proceeded to obey the summons, cheered on our way by the glorious sunshine and refreshed by the cool glacier-air. We now ascended to the extreme limit of vegetation, the verge of the glacier, which in a vast arch descended towards us from the trough of snow formed by the Blümlisalphorn and Weisse Frau. But here some tough work was in store for us; for it occupied till 7 o'clock to attain the summit of the ridge by traversing the stony slopes and the bed of snow which partially covered them. Leaving the Oeschinengrat to the left, the guides led the way along the western side of the shelving rock towards the Hochthürli, and the Balm again served us as head-quarters for the day. Here we divested ourselves of everything not absolutely necessary for the attack on glaciers and snow-fields. Old LAUENER, when called upon to invent a suitable name for our cavern, bethought himself awhile, and then in a moment of inspiration proposed "Quartierloch" (quartering hole), an appellation which we gladly retain as a genuine emanation of unsophisticated genius. On a careful examination of the commisiariat, it was found that a bottle might well be spared



THE QUARTIERLOCH

for a preliminary libation in honour of the "White Lady", and the day, which had hitherto proved so favorable to our undertaking, received additional eclat from the present ceremony which was performed with fitting solemnity. At our feet rolled the right arm of the Blümlisalp Glacier towards the valley, and beyond it the eye rested on some of the mountains in the far west.\*

"Now, LAUENER, can you tell us why this glacier and the whole mountain is called "Blümlisalp"?"

"To be sure I can; we want no professor from the town to tell us that; on the contrary those learned gentlemen often come to us for a lesson in these matters."

"Well, let us hear it!"

"Yes, but it is a long story."

"Then make it a short one; you know many a novel of six volumes could be advantageously told in as many pages."

"Well then, you must know that long long ago the whole of this Alp was covered with the richest pastures and the most beautiful wild flowers (Blümlein), and belonged to a herdsman whose riches made him presumptuous and overbearing. They say this fault is not uncommon even now-a-days in rich people, so that . . . . ."

Here BISCHOF indulged in a grimace indicative of his strong disapprobation of these failings, in the course of which his short pipe diverged to the vicinity of his ear.

"Is it not so, BISCHOF?"

"No doubt it is; does not the proverb say: When the goat is too well off, it becomes mischievous?"

"True, and so did this goat, — the herdsman I mean.

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\* See Plate No. 10, The "Quartierloch".

In his arrogant pride he built himself a staircase of cheeses, and took every opportunity of displaying his riches. Now if that had been all, he would have harmed nobody but himself, but he began to keep company with a maiden, pretty and poor, without any serious intentions of marrying her. One day the blind old father of the girl came to reproach him for his misdeeds; but he got nothing but abuse from the herdsman, who did not offer him a morsel to eat, and finished by kicking him down the cheese-stairs. The girl, who now seemed possessed of the devil, laughed and remained on the Alp. Another day the herdsman's mother came up from the valley, and begged and prayed her son for heaven's sake to lead a better life, promising him her blessing if he would make an honest woman of the girl. "What care I for your blessing, old woman? What care I for church and parson? My blessing is the rich, flowery Alp, my church the blue sky, and the parson is myself. Be off, and keep your twaddle to yourself!" Shocked at these impious words, the mother remained speechless; horror prevented even her tears from flowing. With a presentiment of some great calamity, she hurried down to the valley as fast as her tottering limbs could carry her. Scarcely had she reached home, when a fearful storm burst forth over the devoted region; the lightning flashed and the thunder pealed during the live-long night, and then suddenly an icy blast, as from the depths of winter, swept down from the Alp. When morning broke and the people of the valley looked with affrighted eyes towards the mountains, behold! the rich pastures of the herdsman were completely covered with glaciers, as it is to this day. Of all the Blümlisalp nothing but the name remains, and they say that the herdsman and his wench are still hidden under the



Wilde Frau.

Weg's Frau.

Schnepf'sch. Blümlisalpstock.

Blümlisalpsee.

Reithorn.



Aeschinegrat.

Blümlisalpstock.  
Blümlisalp-Glacier

1882/83

Die Blümlisalp vom Aeschinegrat aus. The Blümlisalp from the Aeschinegrat.

ice. When there is a storm in the mountains they rise from the chasms; the herdsman rushes madly from mountain to mountain, his shrieks rising above the storm, whilst the girl sits on the top of the Wilde Frau, and gazes fixedly towards the Kienthal, where her father's house once stood. Then, when the herdsman has exhausted his fury, he fetches his icy companion and descends with her to the lowest caverns of the glacier, where they must expiate their crimes till the last day."

Our stay at the Quartierloch was not of long duration. At half past 7 we had reached the Hochthürli, and the broad, colossal front of the Blümlisalp now lay immediately before us.\* The huge glaciers presented a vast, sluggish expanse amidst the numerous peaks, and the snowy slopes, of which those of the Blümlisalphorn exhibited the greatest variety of form, glistened like the purest silver. These imposing masses, clothed in the most spotless white, and contrasting beautifully with the deep blue sky, form a picture of rare grandeur. The ascent of this worthy rival of the Wengernalp presents no greater difficulty than that of the latter, and well merits being visited more frequently.

Against the rocks of the Hochthürli the ladder which WILLENER had employed the previous year was still leaning, but so injured by long exposure to the elements that no reliance could be placed on it. We therefore abandoned it, hoping that the spring snow which had proved so serviceable on the Doldenhorn would here aid us in crossing the chasms of the glacier. Nor were we disappointed. We were, indeed, frequently obliged to wade through a thick layer of snow, but

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\* See Plate No. 11, At the Hochthürli.

the crevasses presented no difficulty, so that we attained the Schnapsfluh without misadventure at a quarter before 9.

How different was now the aspect of this world from the appearance it presented on Aug. 29th and Sept. 1st, 1859! Again a bank of clouds rested on the lower mountains of the Kander and Kien-Thal, but beyond an elevation of 7000 ft. they did not venture. We ourselves and the mighty summits above basked in the unclouded brilliance of the morning sun, which most gratefully tempered the icy atmosphere. Now not a breath of air interrupted the solemn silence of this sublime wilderness. After a short repose, elated by the prospect of the approaching victory, we then set forth to make the final and decisive assault.

Here too fortune again favoured us. The ascent to the triangle was little more than an agreeable walk, so pleasant was the footing afforded by the hard, frozen snow. When we attained the western ridge, already frequently mentioned, it proved to be likewise encrusted with snow to the depth of several inches, into which the feet comfortably and securely sank as we ascended, thus rendering the services of the axe superfluous. Mindful, however, of the fact that this coating of snow concealed a surface of smooth, solid ice, we progressed with the utmost circumspection, and did not neglect the usual precaution of attaching ourselves to the rope.

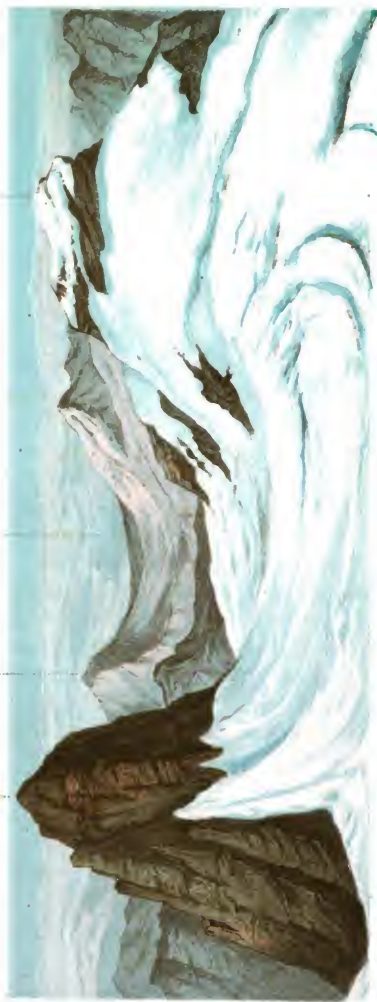
We had not proceeded far, when at a curve in the ridge we perceived to our left on the shelving ice the signal which WILLENER had planted at this spot; to the larch stem still adhered some tattered remnants of cloth, which we recognised as once having belonged to a red flag. The flag-staff had descended with the ice some 200 ft. below the spot where it had been erected the previous year. As we descended from

Lake of Thun.  
Thuner-See.

Vieser.

Rhinloppstuck.

Wilde-Frau



Ausblick nach Norden.

View to the North.

the Weisse Frau, we disengaged it from its bed of ice and carried it off as a trophy. Of the flag of the expedition of 1859 not a vestige could be discovered. It had in all probability been forced downwards by the advancing snow to the glacier, which in its turn will one day reject it and restore it to the light of day.

The ridge now became more and more precipitous, and the crust of snow which had hitherto proved so serviceable gradually disappeared; the bare ice began to afford a very unsatisfactory footing, and the aid of the "Alpstock" to prove insufficient. After an ascent of one hour we were therefore compelled again to have recourse to the axe, from which the sparks soon began vigorously to fly. At the point where this became necessary we were not more than a quarter of an hour from the summit of the triangle, and at half past 10 o'clock the point in the attainment of which we had thrice been baffled, was reached with an exulting shout. The view, from this sharp angle, of the smooth and precipitous shelving snow, as it gradually expanded in its descent, was one of singular beauty. At the base of the icy wall the flat snow-field presented a no less magnificent spectacle; from the Blümlisalpstock to the Wilde Frau dense masses of snow lay in one vast expanse, and far far below, the blue waters of the Lake of Thun with its faithful guardian the Niesen, faintly shimmered through the haze. Beyond the lake the valley of the Aare could be distinguished, through which the river meandered like a silken thread, and in the extreme horizon the prospect was bounded by the distant Jura chain.\* This picture, however, was soon concealed from our view by the eddies of the

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\* See Plate No. 12, View towards the North.

mist, which like a vast and turbulent ocean seemed to threaten to engulf us.

And now with redoubled zeal we made preparations for the attainment of the final goal, - the summit of the Weisse Frau. It lay so near, and yet a veritable devil's bridge must be traversed to attain it! This ridge consists of pure ice, and is in some parts so narrow as barely to afford space for one foot at a time, and it is no exaggeration to say its inclination exceeded 50°. To the right and left, precipitous walls of ice, glittering in the sun, and as smooth as if cut with a knife, descended to the basins in which the glaciers collect their masses, the most savage of which are imbedded between the Blümlisalphorn and the Weisse Frau. Of all trials to which the nerves can be subjected this was perhaps one of the most fearful; yet the vigorous handiwork of our pioneers, the glorious prospect, and the unbounded exuberance of our spirits combined to shorten its duration. Twenty-five minutes sufficed for the passage of the giddy bridge, at the further extremity of which a precipice of several thousand feet in depth, with the Tschingel Glacier at its base, yawned at our feet, proving that we had attained the summit of the Weisse Frau! It was now 5 minutes before 11 o'clock.

Again the giants of the Alpine world, from Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa to the Finsteraarhorn rose before our eyes; they were still surrounded by a surging ocean of fog, which seemed to venture to embrace but their bases, leaving their majestic pinnacles unprofaned. The view of the Bernese Alps was still more overpowering from this point than from the Doldenhorn, from which they are considerably more distant. The Jungfrau seemed to rise to a still greater elevation, the Eiger exhibited its usual repelling aspect, and the

huge masses of the Aletschhorn presented the most imposing appearance. A feeling of the profoundest awe was produced by the stupendous masses of the Tschingel Glacier, the solid ice and numerous chasms of which seemed to create a strange commotion on its snowy surface like the troubled billows of a stormy ocean, whilst its huge surges appeared to break over the Lötschengrat. Our position resembled that of a lofty light-house in the midst of the sea, for the base of the Weisse Frau on all sides was washed by these icy waves; but here, instead of the monotonous roar of breakers, reigned the most profound silence, broken only by the occasional thunder of a distant avalanche.

Words cannot depict the awful magnificence of a scene, the mere recollection of which calls forth an involuntary burst of praise towards its Creator. None but those who have witnessed a similar spectacle can form the faintest conception of our sensations.

Overwhelmed by such impressions, which this prospect produced in a more marked degree than that from the Doldenhorn, we stood for a time speechless and lost in admiration. When at last our attention was directed to the summit on which we stood, we perceived that our position was a sufficiently precarious one. The summit of the Weisse Frau consists of an extremely narrow ridge running from North-east to south west, about 300 ft. in length, with three different snowy elevations. The first of these is attained as soon as the ice-ridge leading from the triangle to the summit is surmounted, and affords the first view of the Tschingel Glacier; the second rises a few feet higher, being the loftiest point of this mountain, whilst the third slightly declines towards the Blümlisalp horn. The northern snow-wall of this ridge is so

precipitous as to be absolutely inaccessible; of the southern we could obtain no view whatever; it appeared to be quite perpendicular, and was moreover effectually concealed by the overhanging masses of snow.\*

We of course desired that our flag should wave on the highest point, and BISCHOF, impatient for this consummation of our feat, with his accustomed impetuosity hastened on, utterly disregarding the overhanging masses of snow, which require the most practised eye to discern how far they rest on a substantial basis, and how far they extend beyond the verge of the abyss. BLATTER admonished him to caution, but BISCHOF heeded not. BLATTER's ire was roused, and darting after the delinquent, he collared him with one hand, and with his Alpstock in the other violently struck the snow at his feet — crash! an avalanche of some 30 ft. in length became detached and flew like a cloud of dust towards the chasms of the Tschingel, revealing a hideous gulf beneath. On the solid brink of this precipice stood BLATTER, proud and immovable, proving to us that he too was not devoid of true courage. "In the same manner", said he, "a Frenchman was precipitated from the Galenstock the other day; shall we follow his example?" We may safely affirm that there was not one of the party but felt a cold shudder on seeing the perpendicular wall of 3—4000 ft. thus disclosed to view. Without farther resistance BISCHOF subjected himself to the authority of BLATTER who step by step, probing the snow with his stick, conducted us in safety to the extreme summit.

Arrived here, the party set about the task of digging a

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\* See Plate No. 13, The summit of the Weisse Frau.





*The Summit of the White Frau .*

*Der Gipfel der Weissen Frau .*

hole in the snow for the reception of the heavy flag-staff, and before long the red flag, the witness of the first ascent of this mountain, was unfurled. On looking around, we perceived a portion of the sunny valley of Kandersteg between the Blümlisalphorn and the Rothhorn. With the aid of the telescope we could distinguish the Hôtel Victoria with its balconies from which we had so often scanned the formidable ridge on which we now stood. The view of the Kienthal was equally uninterrupted, but the distant prospect was only visible when the dense masses of fog occasionally rolled together in huge piles, like troops dispersed by a hostile cannonade. The grey clouds likewise seemed to endeavour to clamber to the summit of the Jungfrau, but were baffled in the attempt. Towards the south the horizon was bounded by the entire chain of the Pennine Alps, enveloped in a similar fitful shroud, whilst now and then a long line of granite strongholds with silvery pinnacles, bathed in the warm radiance of an Italian sun, peeped above the haze. Although on the surface of the ocean, where its depth measures hundreds of fathoms, the wildest tempest rages, and the proudest craft are hurled from billow to billow, the rigging groans and human cries of distress are overwhelmed by the roar of the hurricane, yet the profound depths retain their eternal calm, and are entire strangers to the insignificant commotion above; thus in the nether world the clouds rolled their billows for many hundred miles around, and were tossed to and fro by the howling blast, whilst the mountain-crests, the giants of the Alps, seemed to deride the feeble tumult, and raised their proud heads as calmly towards the azure heavens, as if they had been consecrated by the gods and could never be approached by the storms of earth. After the eye had com-

pleted its distant survey, it invariably returned to rest with renewed wonder on the nearer objects, the narrow snowy ridge on which the party, crowded together, held their bivouac, the fearful abysses which opened at our feet, and above all the stupendous Tschingel Glacier.

The temperature on the summit, though low, was by no means unbearable, varying between  $34^{\circ}$  and  $35\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  Faht., and in the absence of a high wind we were enabled to prolong our stay to  $1\frac{1}{4}$  hr., during which a visit was paid to the third of the snowy eminences. As the human frame, however, is not calculated to endure a protracted state of inactivity in the snow with impunity, and as we had by this time most thoroughly feasted our eyes on the sublime spectacle, we were compelled at a quarter past 12 o'clock to sound the retreat.

The attainment of the summit from the extremity of the triangle had been a task of no ordinary difficulty, but the descent proved a doubly hazardous undertaking. To the right and left the eye unavoidably rested on the profound glacier-abysses, into which a single false step would probably precipitate the luckless wayfarer; for, although we were all attached to the rope, a loss of footing on the part of one of our number would almost inevitably drag down a second, and there remained the momentous question, whether the remainder of the party possessed sufficient strength under such trying circumstances to rescue the unfortunates. It is, moreover, a well-known fact that in descending an icy slope, the inflexible and narrow heel is far less trustworthy than the broader and more pliant sole which is employed in the ascent. BLATTER, fully aware of this peril, assumed the command without opposition, and organized the march as follows. LAUENER headed the party as first pioneer, his office being to hew steps to

replace the old which had disappeared since the morning. His efforts were, however, attended with but indifferent success, for the "Firn" or surface-snow proved too crystalline and granulous to admit of being readily compressed to a solid mass, and this treacherous dust rested on slippery ice. LAUENER was followed by BLATTER himself, who cautiously ascertained the trustworthiness of each step. Under his especial care the Author came next, after him the younger LAUENER in a neutral position, then FELLEBERG under the protection of BISCHOF who brought up the rear. The entire attention of each of the party was directed to the footsteps of the man before him, and BLATTER, his eagle-eye fixed on those behind, was careful to observe that no one progressed more than one step at a time, not till each had securely planted his right foot did he himself proceed to set the example of advancing with the left. At the same time he gave strict injunctions that each step should be accompanied by a firm insertion of the axes and the spikes of the Alpstock in the snow, which in case of a fall would serve as a support until assistance could be rendered. As the lives of the whole party were at stake, such caution can hardly be deemed superfluous; we were, moreover, thus enabled to accomplish the perilous descent without the slightest mishap, and in a comparatively short space of time. The point of the triangle once attained, the same circumspection became less necessary, partly because the declivity was more gradual, and partly owing to the hard crust of snow which precluded the possibility of the feet penetrating to the ice.

We thus reached the Schnapsfluh in one hour, there drank a farewell glass to the fluttering banner of the Weisse Frau, captured a *Desoria* ("glacier-flea") in passing, and under the fierce rays of a mid-day sun which wofully scorched our

visages notwithstanding the protection of veils, but at the same time gloriously illumined the vast glacier-world, wended our way towards the Hochthürli. At 2 o'clock we regained the Quartierloch, in the cool shade of which a comfortable repast was partaken of, and a gentle post-prandial siesta of twenty minutes indulged in.

At 3 o'clock we resumed the journey, clambered over the Oeschinengrat as the nearest point, and directed our steps towards the Kienthal. To our no small satisfaction we perceived that the slopes towards the Bundalp were covered with a succession of snow-fields, of which we gladly availed ourselves for the purpose of sliding luxuriously downwards. And a right merry mode of locomotion it proved to be. Sitting or standing, singly, in pairs, or three or four together, according to the caprice of the moment, the party dashed down the declivity, performing somersets and sundry other feats by way of diversion, accompanied by shouts of laughter. With incredible rapidity our frolic was terminated by the stony Bundalp, which we soon gladly quitted for a fragrant wood, traversed by an affluent of the Kienbach, gaily dancing downwards in numerous cascades. Here, by way of substitute for laurels, we adorned our head-gear with sprigs of the Alpine rose which flourished luxuriantly on the moist, grassy banks of the brook.

Towards 5 o'clock in the afternoon we reached the Steinen Alp at the bottom of the Kienthal, here magnificently commanded by the Gspaltenhorn and the Butlosa. It was a most pleasurable sensation once more to set foot on the elastic turf, to see the cattle peacefully grazing in the meadows, to hear the tinkling of the bells reechoed by the rocks, and to be greeted by joyful shouts from the nearest chalets in answer to our own. In one of these chalets we were most hospitably

received, and regaled with hot coffee and milk, as well as the delicious, cool spring-water of the Alp.

According to our original plan our day's work was to have been terminated at this spot; as the sun, however, was still high in the heavens, and our spirits were still far from exhausted, we at once determined on a farther walk of four hours to the lower extremity of the Kienthal. Any one who on this evening had beheld the complacent conquerors of the Weisse Frau gaily roving through the Kienthal with its picturesque forests and cascades, would probably have sworn that they were on their return from some exhilarating conviviality. And a delightful walk it was through the verdant, fragrant, trickling dale.

At a hamlet, which bears the same name as the valley, we were almost tempted to enter an inn of not uninviting appearance; laughing girls bandied jests at the fountain, and the elders stood at their garden-gates with folded arms and weary countenances, whilst the Blümlisalp in the background, bathed in the golden rays of the setting sun seemed to wish us good-night. Our walking capabilities, however, being yet tolerably unimpaired, and the cool evening air proving so grateful to our burning cheeks, we resolved on proceeding to Reichenbach, where we arrived in the deepening twilight. Here too the inn did not seem sufficiently attractive to arrest our progress, and Mühlenen now became our final goal.

At half past 9 o'clock, precisely 19 hours after our departure from Kandersteg, the expedition came to a close. Kindly visages smiled upon us, and clean beds courted our wearied limbs. After a feeble attempt at supper, during which knives and forks repeatedly glided from our hands, overcome by sleep, we staggered to our several apartments, whence we

did not emerge until after the most profound oblivion of 12 hours.

On the forenoon of July 3rd we were aroused from our slumbers by a flood of sunshine pouring in at our windows, and greeted by a magnificent view of the Blümlisalp in all its splendour. Half an hour later we were summoned to dinner, after which two carriages were put in requisition, one of which conveyed the travellers, the other the guides. We will not boast of our own personal appearance, but our faithful attendants presented a picture worthy the pencil of TENIERS: a wild and weather-beaten crew it was; one exhibited a face swollen from exposure to the sun and vying with it in fiery redness; another appeared to have had his countenance completely flayed; a third, who from neglecting the precaution of spectacles on the glacier, suffered from highly inflamed eyes, hid his diminished head under a red umbrella, whilst the physiognomy of the fourth — BISCHOF of course — hung in tatters like the flag we had borne away as a trophy, and which he now brandished in triumph, accompanying the action with a choice selection of Swiss melodies and a superlative display of his never-failing grimaces. Our carriages rattled merrily down the sunny slopes of the Aeschiberg, and then conveyed us through an avenue of walnuts on the bank of the Lake of Thun to Interlaken, through the fashionably thronged promenade of which our disreputable-looking cortège drove with as much composure as if we had been accredited from the court of the Spirit of the Mountains!













